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# **From Northern Cyprus to Crimea:**

Theory Testing Neorealism and Constructivism

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# 1. Introduction

In August 1960 a new state was born. The island of Cyprus, which had been under constant Ottoman and British rule for centuries, finally gained its independence. The newly founded “Republic of Cyprus” would be co-governed by representatives of the island’s two main ethnic communities, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. At the same time, the “Treaty of Guarantee” was signed between the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey.<sup>1</sup> According to its terms, all three parties were assigned overseeing duties on the island, with the aim to prevent any breach to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Additionally, the guarantor powers were allowed to potentially take unilateral military actions, if the provisions of the treaty were breached.

The Treaty was considered especially demeaning to nationalist Greek Cypriots. Since 1955, a nationalist guerrilla group named EOKA had been engaged in an open revolt against British rule with the aim to achieve “enosis”, a widely popular demand amongst Greek Cypriots which translates as “union” with Greece. On the contrary, Turkish Cypriots had originally advocated for “taksim”, partition of the island into two independent states. However, the new constitution gave their parliamentary representatives veto powers and thus they were generally content with the post-1960 state of affairs. Nonetheless, the Greek Cypriots’ attempts to alter the established constitution and dissolve the bi-communal government of the island in 1963 created a wave of mistrust between the two communities and increased the concerns of Turkish officials.<sup>2</sup>

In July 15, 1974, the Colonel’s Junta in Athens performed a coup against president Makarios and replaced him with Nikos Sampson, a former EOKA militant. Five days later, Turkey replied by invading the island and over the following month, it managed to conquer approximately a third of Cyprus’ territory.<sup>3</sup> This area has been controlled by the ‘Turkish

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<sup>1</sup> “Treaty of Guarantee”, August 16, 1960, *United Nations Treaty Series Online*, registration no.5475, access date: July 16, 2020.

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20382/v382.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Tozun Bahceli, “Cyprus 1974: Turkey’s Military Success Followed by Political Stalemate”, *Mediterranean Quarterly* 25, no 1 (Winter 2014): 7-10.

<sup>3</sup> Bahceli, 10, 11

Republic of Northern Cyprus’, a de-facto state, founded in 1983. Meanwhile, the international community still considers these lands as illegally occupied territory of the Republic of Cyprus. Despite numerous attempts, no solution in regards to the partition of Cyprus has been reached as of today.<sup>4</sup>

Almost 40 years after the Turkish invasion in Cyprus, a series of demonstrations began to take shape in Kiev’s Independence Square in November, 2013. These protests were fuelled by the policies of President Victor Yanukovich and specifically by his government’s vote to reject an association agreement proposed by the European Union. This agreement would advance Ukraine’s integration with the E.U., with the precondition that former Prime Minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, would be released from prison.<sup>5</sup>

Instead, Yanukovich opted to revive his country’s damaged ties with Russia and even received a 15 billion bailout from Moscow in January 2014.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, the increasing public resentment had taken a revolutionary form. In February, the Ukrainian president was ousted by his parliament and was forced to flee the country, seeking asylum in Russia.<sup>7</sup> His political swansong was a plea to Moscow, requesting Russia’s intervention. Soon after, a small number of Russian military forces, disguised as local militia, began operating in the Crimean peninsula. In March 12, the Russian controlled regional parliament in Simferopol decided in favour of the secession of Crimea from the Ukrainian state and in March 16, after an arguably illegitimate referendum, the region was effectively annexed by Russia<sup>8</sup>. Four

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<sup>4</sup> Luke Harding, “Turkish Cypriot leader warns Cyprus is facing permanent partition”, *The Guardian*, February 6, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/06/turkish-cypriot-leader-warns-cyprus-facing-permanent-partition-mustafa-akinci>

<sup>5</sup> Ian Traynor and Oksana Grytsenko, “Ukraine suspends talks on EU trade pact as Putin wins tug of war”, *The Guardian*, November 21, 2013 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/21/ukraine-suspends-preparations-eu-trade-pact>

<sup>6</sup> Steve Gutterman, “Russia gives breakdown of \$15 billion Ukraine bailout”, *Reuters*, January 24, 2014. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-russia-bailout/russia-gives-breakdown-of-15-billion-ukraine-bailout-idUSBREA0M21620140123>

<sup>7</sup> Pavel Polityuk, Matt Robinson, “Ukraine parliament ousts Yanukovich, Tymoshenko freed”, *Reuters*, February 22, 2014. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine/ukraine-parliament-ousts-yanukovich-tymoshenko-freed-idUKBREA1H0EM20140222>

<sup>8</sup> “How the separatists delivered Crimea to Moscow”, *Reuters*, March 13, 2014 <https://in.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-russia-akshonov-idINL6N0M93AH20140313>

years later, Russia's control over the peninsula has been furthermore cemented through military presence and various development projects. In the words of Vladimir Putin, Crimea is now 'an inseparable part of Russia', despite international condemnation.<sup>9</sup>

It would be a hyperbole to suggest that the two cases are entirely similar in regards to their causes and outcomes. To begin with, even if we accept the unproven claim that the Euromaidan protests were part of a coup against Yanukovych<sup>10</sup>, there is no clear external actor behind it, unlike what was the case in the forcible removal of Makarios in Cyprus. Secondly, Russia's military involvement cannot be seen as a legitimate intervention, while the first phase of Turkish operations in Cyprus was in accordance to the provisions of the Treaty of Guarantee<sup>11</sup>. Finally, the outcomes, albeit very similar, differ in the sense that Northern Cyprus was never officially annexed by Turkey but was instead absorbed by a new de-facto state. Russia, on the other hand, has made significant steps towards formally incorporating Crimea since March 2014.<sup>12</sup>

However, these differences should not overshadow the vital similarities between the two cases. First of all, they involve conflict between a strong regional power and a weaker neighbouring state. Secondly, in both cases, major political developments lead to immediate reactions. Soon after Makarios and Yanukovych were deposed, military interventions by Turkey and Russia followed. The former state could not afford Cyprus becoming property of Greece and the latter could not allow Ukraine to escape its zone of influence. Furthermore, the role of minorities should not be underestimated in either case. Supposedly, both Turkey and Russia intervened to defend their compatriots in Cyprus and Crimea.

This observable pattern, from political instability to foreign invasion, establishes common grounds for comparative research on the two cases. Additionally, certain factors contributing to these conflicts, such as power politics and the presence of ethnic minorities,

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<sup>9</sup> Ann Simmons, "Russia Cements Ties With Crimea, Freezing Conflict With West", *The Wall Street Journal*, March 19, 2020. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-cements-ties-with-crimea-freezing-conflict-with-west-11584523802>

<sup>10</sup> Luke Harding, "Kiev's protesters: Ukraine uprising was no neo-Nazi power-grab", *The Guardian*, March 13, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/13/ukraine-uprising-fascist-coup-grassroots-movement>

<sup>11</sup> Supra, note 1

<sup>12</sup> Simmons, "Russia Cements Ties With Crimea".

provide an opportunity for further analysis based on existing theoretical frameworks. Therefore, the primary aim of this thesis is to test the political theories of Neorealism and Constructivism and determine to what degree they can be used to explain the causes behind these events.

## 2. Research Design

This thesis is a qualitative comparative case study in which the main research objective is to conduct a theory test between the theories of Neorealism and Constructivism based on the two selected cases; the war on Cyprus in 1974 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014. By conducting theory-testing on these two cases, I aspire to shed some light on the underlying factors behind Turkey's and Russia's actions against Cyprus and Ukraine respectively and thus contribute to a better understanding of these events. At first, I will conduct neorealist and constructivist analyses in the empirical context of the selected cases individually. After that process is complete, I will proceed to a comparative assessment, where the explanatory power of the theories will be evaluated in relation to the selected cases.

The value of testing and comparing political theories has been thoroughly debated in academic literature. As an example, while some scholars raise doubts over the ability of political science researchers to conduct theory testing in an effective way, positivists believe that by employing efficient methodology is enough to guide empirical observations and generate knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, by using qualitative methods on case studies, political

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<sup>13</sup> Milja Kurki and Colin Wright, "International Relations and Social Science" in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, ed. T. Dunne et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (Oxford University Press, 2013), 30.

scientists have traditionally been able to advance our collective knowledge about interstate relations.<sup>14</sup>

In order to test whether neorealism or constructivism is more suitable to explain the two cases, two observable implications of each theory will be examined. If neorealism applies to the cases, we should be able to observe patterns of rational, strategic thinking by Turkey and Russia, since rationality is one of the core assumptions of neorealist thinking.<sup>15</sup> The second observable implication of neorealism is based on witnessing a state's behaviour that is dictated by structural anarchy, thus involving elements of self-help and security prioritization.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the explanatory power of constructivism will be evaluated based on the influence that ideas and norms had over the decisions of Turkey and Russia's political elite. Thus, we should supposedly be able to observe policies that are primarily determined by social constructs<sup>17</sup>, such as identity, ideology and norms<sup>18</sup>. Finally, it is important to note that, since there is a strong chance that the actors involved are acting out of mixed motives, it is crucial to locate the determining factor that influences their course of action.

Being aware of the respective historical context is also deemed as essential, in order for my investigation to produce accurate results. Thus, I will occasionally provide the readers with the necessary historical background, in order to enable them to reach their own deductions and review my work more efficiently.

In terms of primary sources used, they often involve statements by protagonists of the events in Cyprus and Ukraine, such as Vladimir Putin and Bulent Ecevit. These include references to power politics but also social constructs, such as identities and norms.

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Bennett and Colon Elman, "Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield", *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 2 (February, 2007): 170.

<sup>15</sup> John Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions", *International Security* 19, no. 3 (Winter 1994-1995): 10

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth, Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Addison-Wesley: 1979), 88, 91

<sup>17</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.

<sup>18</sup> James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics*, (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 22-24.

Naturally, their claims will not be taken at face value. It is crucial to distinguish if their rationalisations are based on facts, subjective realities or if they are aimed at appeasing the international community.

While primary sources, allow me to seek for evidence that supports either theory, I will also review secondary sources. In particular, certain scholars of political science have employed their preferred theoretical framework when looking at these specific cases. Their work has thus emphasized on specific causes behind these conflicts, while overlooking other factors or even attempting to undermine their importance. My goal is to engage with these scholars' findings, assess their arguments and attempt to locate and fill any gaps in their research.

Finally, it should be noted that this thesis does not encourage a divisionary approach in the field of International Relations based on theory. By using two theories that emphasize on distinct aspects of state behaviour, I will be able to present alternative explanations that allow for a deeper understanding of the complex causal mechanisms behind the selected cases. Thus, apart from evaluating the explanatory power of each theory in relation to the cases, I will also thoroughly examine the two conflicts from two different theoretical angles.

### 3. Literature Review

#### 4.1 Neorealism

The broad theoretical framework of realism has dominated the field of international relations in the past decades. Its advocates support that it is the most consistent theory in terms of providing sufficient explanations for state behaviour. Considering its impact in the modern world, it is no wonder that realist theories have traditionally been at the centre of academic debate, evoking frequent attacks from other contemporary political theories.<sup>19</sup>

The inception of realism as a modern political theory is owed to the work of the “classical realists” of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Realism revolves around the concept of power and how it determines the behaviour of states. As stated by one of the most prominent classical realists, Hans Morgenthau, “International Politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power” and power itself is always “the immediate aim” of states”. This power can be determined by estimating the available material resources of a state or by judging its ability to dictate the behaviour of others.<sup>20</sup> In terms of international conflicts, Morgenthau attributed their emergence to our inherent imperfections as human beings.<sup>21</sup>

Neorealism, or Structural Realism, is a branch of realist thought which emerged with Kenneth Waltz’s monumental work, “Theory of International Politics”. By retaining certain basic principles of classical realists, Waltz introduced a new approach to studying international relations. His theory suggests that in order to examine the way that states interact with one another, it is essential to grasp the conditions under which these interactions occur. According to his model, states are both rational actors and operating parts of an international system which is characterized by a lack of a supreme authority, namely “anarchy”. Since there is no order in the system and no coercive power, which could

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<sup>19</sup> Michael J. Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 20

<sup>20</sup> Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Revised by Kenneth W. Thompson, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 31-33

<sup>21</sup> Morgenthau, 3-4.

potentially restrain the behaviour of actors, states within Waltz's system are forced to resort to "self-help" tactics and compete with one another for survival.<sup>22</sup>

Waltz's theory, which is sometimes referred to as "defensive realism", posits that the primary objective of states is to preserve their security, since all other objectives are dependent on their survival of the state in the first place. Therefore power is not seen as end by itself but rather as one of the means that increases the chances of survival. Instead, what matters the most is that states preserve their place in the system and increase their security. However, the constant antagonism that is inherent in this system forces states to continuously compete with one another. Therefore, a recurring implication of anarchy is the emergence of coalitions. In turn, these coalitions enable the process of power balancing and prevent the emergence of a global hegemon.<sup>23</sup>

Robert Jervis, another defensive realist, has provided valuable insights based on the abovementioned conditions and in regards to the so called "security dilemma". According to this concept, in order to shield themselves in this anarchic environment, states are forced to take pre-emptive measures to increase their power and security. In turn, these strategies constitute reason for concern to neighbouring powers, who cannot always discern between offensive and defensive strategies. This creates a vicious circle of continuous armament and antagonism.<sup>24</sup> Jervis has argued that it is not impossible for powerful states to overcome their suspicions and cooperate with one another, since they are generally less vulnerable to external attacks and their survival is not at immediate risk. Therefore he believes that the influence that the security dilemma exerts on states is dependent on their capabilities and hence it can be alleviated. However, he points out that the risk of being exploited by the other party and the possibility of an abrupt defection from cooperating processes usually constitute serious hindrances to such attempts.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 88-89, 93, 107

<sup>23</sup> Waltz, 124-128.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma", *World Politics*, 30, no. 2 (1978): 167-170.

<sup>25</sup> Jervis, 172-174, 178-181.

John Mearsheimer has also built upon the concept of anarchy to establish what is known as “offensive realism”. Although he shares most of Waltz’s ideas<sup>26</sup>, his research leads to different conclusions in regards to the behaviour of great powers in the international arena. While defensive realism argues that states only pursue power in order to ensure their survival, offensive realists contend that powerful states may adopt power-maximizing strategies in order to become hegemons of the system. Only by obtaining this almost unfeasible status, can great powers guarantee their survival.<sup>27</sup> As a result, the powerful states adopt offensive minded and expansionist tactics with the aim to increase their relative power and eventually become hegemons of their regional subsystems, an arguably more realistic goal than global domination. Thus, the main difference between offensive and defensive realists, both of which identify themselves as structural realists, is their views in terms of how much power do states seek.

Nevertheless, despite this divergence of opinion, both neorealist branches recognize that waging war is a rational choice, under certain circumstances. As an example, Van Evera, a defensive realist, has argued that expected power shifts can drive certain states to initiate preventive wars, when they notice that their own relative power is on a gradual decline. For these states, a weakened position may lead to a defeat in a potential war with an adversary or even an unfavourable compromise in the future.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Robert Art argues that military operations may result in significant political and economic gains. Through “selective engagement”, a state with hegemonic aspirations can take advantage of its army and strategic alliances in order to wage war effectively and “prevent adverse circumstances...from arising”<sup>29</sup>. Art’s ideas are based on the hegemonic aspirations of the United States but can also explain the aggressive attitude of any power competing for regional dominance, as it illustrates the viability of pre-emptive war.

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<sup>26</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York & London: Norton, 2001), 30-31.

<sup>27</sup> Mearsheimer, 34-35.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), 76

<sup>29</sup> Robert J. Art, “Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement”, *International Security* 23, no. 3 (Winter, 1998-1999): 80-82.

Evidently, most neorealists are concerned with the state behaviour in the international arena. However, Copeland has argued that the same structural conditions can potentially apply to regional subsystems as well. If there is no powerful actor capable of meddling in regional conflicts and constraining the behaviour of regional actors, these subsystems can also be considered anarchic.<sup>30</sup> Despite agreeing with Mearsheimer's arguments about security maximizing states, Copeland's "Dynamic Differentials" structural realist theory emphasizes on expected trends in terms of states' capabilities. He argues that rising states are comparably more moderate in their foreign policy approach compared to states that expect a sharp decline in their power. For the latter group, initiating a war can potentially prevent this downward trend.<sup>31</sup>

## 4.2 Constructivism

The theory of social constructivism emerged as a criticism to the aforementioned ideas. Constructivists do not see the world as the result of power politics, nor do they recognize the inevitability of the anarchical international structure. They reject generalizations about state behaviour and believe that in their interaction with other actors, states bring their own realities into play: political, historical and cultural.<sup>32</sup> Thus, some early constructivists were vocal critics of neorealism.

Richard Ashley is a perfect example. In what he describes as his "polemic against 'the neorealist movement as a whole'", he characterizes the theory as dichotomous, aiming to present its findings as the unalterable natural order, while also overemphasizing on power and ignoring crucial societal factors.<sup>33</sup> Instead, despite its proclaimed scientific reasoning, neorealism follows an extremely state-centric approach, which views states as singular,

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<sup>30</sup> Dale C. Copeland, "Realism and Neorealism in the study of regional conflict", in *In International Relations Theory and Regional Transformation*, T.V. Paul (ed.) (Cambridge University Press: 2012), 51-52.

<sup>31</sup> Copeland, 63-66.

<sup>32</sup> Karin M. Fierke, "Constructivism" in *International Relations Theories, Discipline and Diversity*, ed. T. Dunne (Oxford University Press: 2013), 189

<sup>33</sup> Richard K. Ashley, "The Poverty of Neorealism." *International Organization* 38, no. 2 (1984): 225-228.

unitary actors and often ignores the interdependent domestic relations that exist between society and political elites.<sup>34</sup> For Ashley, power in neorealism is measured simply in material terms and concerns the distribution of capabilities, which is an approach that completely disregards the impact of societal and psychological factors in state interaction.<sup>35</sup>

On the contrary, other constructivists, like Robert Adler, have attempted to bridge the gap between the two theories. In Adler's view, all human institutions have been established and gradually solidified by our consciousness, at one point or another. Constructivism aims to examine this "intersubjective knowledge" and its implications on society and on the material world. Therefore, as a social theory, constructivism does not neglect the assumptions of realists and liberalists but instead aims to shed some light on aspects of international politics that have not been given enough attention.<sup>36</sup>

Alexander Wendt's views pointed towards a similar direction but followed a slightly more critical approach towards neorealism. His work is based on the assumption that there are commonly shared ideas amongst actors, which influence their interests and provide the structures for human associations.<sup>37</sup> Despite the fact that Wendt does not reject the concept of structural anarchy per se, he critiques the tendency of neorealists to treat it as monolithic and unchanged. Specifically, he argues that by treating the structure as separate from the constant interaction of units within itself, neorealists disregard the causal mechanisms that create, preserve or even alter said structure<sup>38</sup>. Anarchy, which realists take for granted, is not inherent in the international system but it is rather socially constructed by states during their interaction. Therefore, anarchy should not be theorized as the main explanatory variable behind power politics and self-help, contrary to neorealist beliefs.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ashley, 238-240.

<sup>35</sup> Ashley, 244-245.

<sup>36</sup> Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics", *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3, (September 1997): 321-323.

<sup>37</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Wendt, 146

<sup>39</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it- The Social Construction of Power-Politics", *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 394,395

In his work, Wendt also provides a valuable insight on norms and how they influence the decision making of political actors. Specifically, he introduces the concept of “choice” in order to categorize the processes under which norms are adopted. Thus, states may be forced to adhere to certain norms, due to restraints forced upon them by external actors, or they may willingly follow a norm that serves to advance their interests. Interestingly enough, there is a third case where norms are followed by states when they are deemed legitimate<sup>40</sup>, which is an idea that insinuates an underlying process of norm internalization. This process is explained by Finnemore and Sikkink, who also point out the importance of norms as regulatory rules for states’ conduct. The two scholars argue that norms are dependent on people’s acceptance of them, meaning that the more they are recognized and adhered to, the more they will be internalized by agents and eventually impact their future decisions. According to what they call “the life cycle of norms”, there are specific stages between the emergence of a norm and its eventual internalization by agents.<sup>41</sup>

The “Logic of Appropriateness”, as coined by James March and Johan Olsen, is another interesting constructivist approach, which suggest that policies are often governed by rules rather than some pragmatic calculation of the potential costs and benefits. These rules are dictated by social norms, culture and cumulative experience and force the actor to opt for what he considers to be the most ‘appropriate’ course of action, instead of the most profitable one<sup>42</sup>. This tendency is also enforced by the actor’s sense of identity, along with his perceptions about his political role and moral obligations. As an example, a war can be justified by appealing to national identity, with or without taking account of the consequences of conflict<sup>43</sup>. Therefore, it becomes evident that this rule-driven behaviour often leads political actors to pay little attention to the potential consequences of their policies and reject alternative approaches.

Finally, in regards to the issue of identity, Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu has provided us with valuable insights. Bozdağlıoğlu has built upon Wendt’s assumptions of systemic

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<sup>40</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 268-274.

<sup>41</sup> Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change”, *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (October 1998): 891,892, 895.

<sup>42</sup> March and Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions*, 22-24

<sup>43</sup> March and Olsen, 160-162.

constructivism, while emphasizing on the process of identity creation within states. In his view, Wendt's theory generally underappreciates the significance of domestic processes and opts instead to overstress the importance of interstate interaction<sup>44</sup>. On the contrary, Bozdağlıoğlu believes that identity creation within states precedes the interaction with others in the international system. According to him, national identities are primarily constructed by individuals in position of power, while the processes of state making are still under way. These early ideas are then institutionalized and imposed to the rest of the society as collective identities. Nevertheless, resistance from powerful societal groups, abrupt political developments and interaction with other actors are crucial variables that could make a decisive impact on the end result<sup>45</sup>. Therefore, domestic aspects such as these are of vital importance in terms of understanding state behaviour.

## **4. The Turkish invasion of Cyprus, 1974**

### **4.1. Neorealist Analysis**

#### *Rationality*

As mentioned in the literature review, realist theories view states as rational actors, operating not according to their whims but rather according to logic and with the aim to accumulate power. In turn, this allows them to survive in a precarious international environment. Therefore the question that needs to be answered here is simple: was Turkey's decision to invade Cyprus in 1974 based on rational planning?

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<sup>44</sup> Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, "Constructivism and Identity Formation: An Interactive Approach", *Uluslararası Hukuk Ve Politika* 3, no. 11 (2007): 132, 136, 137.

<sup>45</sup> Bozdağlıoğlu, 139-142.

In order to answer this question, we need to establish if the two military operations on Cyprus made strategic sense from the Turkish point of view. Although, there is some variation in regards to the exact numbers of the combatants in Cyprus, there is no doubt that the coalition of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot forces outnumbered their adversaries. While the combined invading forces have been estimated at approximately fifty thousand men, the Greek Cypriots had only twelve thousand at their immediate disposal, including the Greek troops that were already stationed on the island. Considering the fact that Turkish units were also accompanied by superior air and naval forces<sup>46</sup>, the decision to invade the island was rational from a strategic point of view. After all, the idea that military force is essential to a state's pursuit of its national interests is widely accepted by neorealist scholars.

The employment of Turkish troops on the island can be seen as successful for multiple reasons. During the first phase of its military operations on the island, between July 20 and July 22, the Turkish army took advantage of its numerical superiority and successfully captured the city Kerynia. The seizure of Kerynia's port allowed Turkey to have a strong military presence on the island, it facilitated the reinforcement of its troops and most importantly, it enabled Turkey to establish a valuable bridgehead in Northern Cyprus' shores, which would prove invaluable during the second phase of its operations a month later.

However, the benefits on a political level were perhaps even more important. Following news of the Turkish invasion, the heads of the "Colonel's Junta" appeared reluctant to become involved, despite calling for general mobilization of troops on July 21<sup>st47</sup>. Their plans to establish a puppet regime on the island had backfired and just four days after Turkish troops set foot on Cyprus, they were forced to resign due to mounting pressure from the public. Additionally, Nikos Sampson, the man who replaced Makarios after the coup, also stepped down on July 23<sup>rd</sup>. In his place, Glafkos Clerides, a member of the Cypriot parliament, was chosen for the post of provisional president. While adversary regimes were breaking down, Ecevit's and his cabinet were idolized in their country, due to their popular decision to invade. Based on the above, the original invasion of July 20 can be judged as a strategic success.

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<sup>46</sup> Solon N. Grigoriadis, *Ιστορία της Σύγχρονης Ελλάδας: 1941-1974, Πολυτεχνείο-Κύπρος-Μεταπολίτευση* [History of Modern Greece: 1941-1974, Polytechnic-Cyprus-Political Transition], Vol.12, Special Ed. for Kyriakatiki Eleftherotypia, 2011, 188-189.

<sup>47</sup> 'Γενική επιστράτευσις εκύρυξε χθες η Ελλάδα', [Greece declared general mobilization yesterday], *To Vima*, July 21, 1974.

My examination in regards to the second phase of Turkish operations, which takes place between August 14<sup>th</sup> and August 16<sup>th</sup> of 1974, points towards similar conclusion. The Turkish president has given mixed justifications about his decision to continue hostilities on August 14. On the one hand, he argues that the decision was taken based on careful strategic military planning. The Turkish military presence on the island was an important achievement, as previously discussed. However, their numerous forces were now gathered on a small area of land, corresponding to approximately 3% of the island's territory. This left them extremely vulnerable to a potential Greek Cypriot counter attack.<sup>48</sup> Advancing towards the south allowed the army to spread its forces and take full advantage of its superiority in terms of numbers and quality of weaponry. This surprising and blunt admittance by Ecevit contradicts the claims that Turkish operations were solely aimed at protecting their compatriots in Cyprus from ethnic cleansing. Arguably, rational strategy-based planning took place as well.

### *Anarchy and self-help*

In realist literature, anarchy does not mean disorder but it is rather used as a term which describes the lack of a higher authority in the international system. However, as Copeland has argued, anarchy can also describe the conditions under which states interact with one another in regional subsystems, provided that no external power can constrain the behaviour of actors from within the system.<sup>49</sup>

If we treat the East Mediterranean of 1974 as a regional subsystem, it is imperative to examine if state actors from within this system are operating under conditions of anarchy. In order for this proposition to stand, there must be no external power capable of constraining the actions of regional actors. As an example, following the outbreak of ethnic violence in Cyprus in December of 1963, the United States and Britain had mediated between Turkey

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<sup>48</sup> BBC News Türkçe, "BBC'nin Kıbrıs harekâtıyla ilgili programı 44 yıl sonra ilk kez yayında", [BBC's program about the operations on Cyprus is on air for the first time in 44 years], YouTube video, posted July 20, 2018, 6:50-7:25  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cb\\_T9t4aKI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cb_T9t4aKI)

<sup>49</sup> Copeland, 51-52

and Greece in fear of war breaking out.<sup>50</sup> Specifically, President Johnson had forbidden Prime Minister Inonu of Turkey from taking unilateral action against Greek Cypriots, in what became known as the “Johnson’s letter”. However, it has been argued that even then, war was averted partially due to Inonu’s reluctance to declare it and partially because of the unpreparedness of his armed forces.<sup>51</sup> The conditions were different eleven years later, as the Turkish army was well equipped and prepared for an overseas intervention.<sup>52</sup> Can we confidently argue that during the summer of 1974, Turkey’s foreign policy was constrained in any way by extra-regional powers?

As mentioned before, Britain did not become actively involved at the early stages of the Cyprus’ crisis, despite being legally obligated to protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the island state, as part of its legal duties as a guarantor power. Its government did not use its forces to prevent Sampson’s coup on July 15<sup>th</sup>, despite the fact that Sampson was viewed very unfavourably. Additionally, Prime Minister Harold Wilson and his Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan appeared unwilling to restore the deposed president of the island and reluctant to collaborate with the Turkish government. According to Ecevit, the Turkish government approached their British counterparts, as soon as Makarios was removed. Their rejection of his plans concerning a joint military response against the new Cypriot regime allegedly forced Turkey to take matters in its own hands before a de-facto “enosis” with Greece took place.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, neither the U.S. nor any international institutions were able to constrain Turkish aggression during the second phase of the Attila operations, which began on August 14. One could perhaps argue that Turkey was subsequently faced with punitive measures for its actions, including a particularly costly U.S. arms embargo from 1975 to 1978<sup>54</sup>. Nonetheless, neither sanctions nor the condemnation of international institutions proved

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<sup>50</sup> Suha Bolukbasi, “The Johnson Letter Revisited”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 29, no. 3 (July 1993): 511-512, 517.

<sup>51</sup> Bolukbasi, 517

<sup>52</sup> Treaty of Guarantee, see note 1

<sup>53</sup> BBC News Türkçe, 4:30-4.58

<sup>54</sup> Nicholas Gage, ‘Greece Criticizes U.S. for Lifting the Arms Embargo Against Turkey’, *The New York Times*, April 3, 1978. <https://www.nytimes.com/1978/08/03/archives/greece-criticizes-us-for-lifting-the-arms-embargo-against-turkey.html>

capable countermeasures to prevent the occupation of Northern Cyprus' territories and the establishment of a de-facto state in those grounds 9 years later.<sup>55</sup>

Based on the abovementioned observations, we can assume that interstate relations between Greece, Turkey and Cyprus took place under structural anarchy. Under these conditions, neorealist literature contends that states are forced to rely on no one but themselves, in order to ensure their security and survival. Turkish foreign policy in Cyprus points towards the same conclusion. During the Geneva peace talks, Turkey was dealing with Greek and Cypriot diplomats, who aspired to restore the former state of affairs in Cyprus, without having to face Turkey on the battlefield. Despite calling for general mobilization of troops on July 21st, Greece refrained from actually sending troops in Cyprus, in fear of escalating the conflict into a Greek-Turkish war. The approach of the new Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis was different: only days after denouncing the Turkish invasion as illegitimate, they announced the departure of Greece from NATO as a means of protest. Afterwards, the Greek government made it known that contacts had been made with representatives of the Soviet Union<sup>56</sup>, which in turn dispatched three military vessels in the Mediterranean on August 14<sup>57</sup>. Karamanlis' primary objective was to pressure the United States into mediating between the two sides and avert the continuation of hostilities.

In short, the newly formed Greek and Cypriot governments were eager to avoid additional bloodshed and territorial losses and were using diplomacy to achieve that aim. Ecevit himself has admitted that Turkey would have ultimately abandoned its negotiating positions in favour of a less fruitful compromise, in case the second phase of Attila had never taken place. According to him, Greece was attracting more and more sympathy from the international community with each passing day since democracy was restored in Athens.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the Turkish prime minister expected that the prolonged negotiations would potentially result in a Greek Cypriot diplomatic victory.

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<sup>55</sup> "Turkish Cypriots proclaim national split from Greeks", *The New York Times*, November 16, 1983.: <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/11/16/world/turkish-cypriots-proclaim-nation-split-from-greeks.html>

<sup>56</sup> Επαφαι Ελλάδος-Ρωσίας, [Contacts between Greece-Russia], *Acropolis*, August 15, 1974

<sup>57</sup> 'Συσκέπτονται Φόρντ-Κίσσιγγερ: Σοβιετικά πολεμικά εισήλθαν στη Μεσόγειο' [Ford-Kissinger consult: Soviet warships entered Mediterranean], *Acropolis*, August 15, 1974

<sup>58</sup> BBC News Türkçe, 6:20-6:48

Having established that Ecevit's concerns about potential Greek and Greek Cypriot aggressions cannot be justified, we can reach one of the two following assumptions. According to the first one, Turkey was somehow completely unaware of Greeks' intentions, despite the willingness of the latter to compromise during the Geneva peace talks. Considering the lack of a higher authority to constrain either side's behaviour, Turkey resorted to self-help tactics in order to achieve their primary objective: establish a permanent military presence on Northern Cyprus. Neorealists proclaim that states feel insecure about the intentions of rival powers. In turn, this limits the chances of cooperation<sup>59</sup> and leads them to endorse self-help strategies. Therefore, by taking into account that Turkish actions were based on the logic of self-help, it is safe to assume that the theory of structural realism can provide adequate explanations for their actions.

According to the second assumption, Turkey was aware of Greece's peaceful intentions but chose to resume the war nonetheless. Neorealism identifies war as a viable policy option and contends that offensive strategies can pay off under the right circumstances. Faced with the prospect of a detrimental peace settlement, Ecevit realized that his army's superior capabilities could bring desirable results and achieve relative gains over their regional rivals. Thus, Turkish diplomats consciously torpedoed the peace talks by issuing ultimatums on Greece and Cyprus, in order to cause a stalemate in discussions<sup>60</sup>. When President of Cyprus, Clerides requested 36 to 48 hours in order to consider the Turkish proposal, Ecevit responded by ordering the initiation of the second round of attacks against Greek Cypriots' positions in Northern Cyprus.

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<sup>59</sup> Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma", 178-181

<sup>60</sup> Adamson, 294-295

## 4.2. Constructivist Analysis

### *Ideas*

Prominent constructivist, Alexander Wendt, has stated that “...the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas...”<sup>61</sup> In regards to the case of Cyprus, it is important to distinguish which ideas can be considered relevant to Turkish operations on the island in 1974. As I will illustrate, the invasion of Cyprus represents a foreign policy choice that is inconsistent with the overall passive stance of Turkey towards the island up until then. Thus, it is vital to examine which social and political processes, if any, are responsible for this change.

Cyprus was first conquered by the Ottomans in 1571 and its people were gradually integrated into the empire. However, following its dissolution in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Muslim Cypriots were gradually disassociated from the new Turkish state. Kemal Ataturk’s nationalistic ideology set the prosperity of mainland Turks as its main objective. His slogan “Peace at Home, Peace in the World” represented an inward-looking, non-expansionist policy that practically meant abandonment of “outside Turks” to their fates<sup>62</sup>. Considering the vital importance of Kemalism, as a defining ideology in Turkish politics<sup>63</sup>, we can deduce that historical and ethnic ties between mainland and Cypriot Turks were weakened over the years and therefore, they should not be considered as a legitimate excuse for the intervention.

Bozdağlıoğlu has offered an alternative explanation for Turkey’s reluctance to intervene in Cyprus before 1974. As he explains, the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the Turkish Republic in its place were almost immediately followed with an attempt to ‘westernize’ the state according to the European standards. This involved an organized effort

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<sup>61</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 1

<sup>62</sup> Rebecca Bryant and Mete Hatay, Turkish Perceptions of Cyprus, PCC Report 1, (2015), 1-3.

<sup>63</sup> Mustafa Aydin, “Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Historical Framework and Traditional Inputs”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4 (October, 1999), 170.

by Turkish authorities to establish strong political and economic ties with the European powers since the 1920s and to ally themselves with the United States'-led bloc, in the post-World War II era. Their admittance in NATO in 1952, along with neighbour Greece, is indicative of their foreign policy at the time, which advocated security prioritizing and integrating with the West. In the meantime, this approach slowly severed their ties with Middle Eastern and African states, thus fully committing their country to a Western-oriented future.<sup>64</sup>

During that period, we can safely deduce that the construction of a new Turkish identity is taking place in a top-down process. This assumption corresponds with Bozdağlıoğlu's constructivist theoretical claims<sup>65</sup>. According to him, identities are usually constructed by the political elite and are then implemented as policy and adopted by society. In the emerging Turkish state, a new identity was forged that bore little resemblance to the Ottoman standards. The Turkish people became more affiliated with "the West" because this development served the aims of their political leadership. We can deduce that their new identity entailed elements of Kemal's ideological legacy and was characterized by an affinity towards Europe and the U.S.

Overall, Bozdağlıoğlu presents a convincing depiction of modern Turkey's foreign policy up until the early 1970s. Interestingly enough, he refrains from utilizing his ideas to shed light on the conflict in Cyprus, despite its significance for modern Turkish political history. In my point of view, he does not elaborate his ideas further because the decision to invade the island is not consistent with the supposed western-oriented Turkish ideology, as he visualizes it.<sup>66</sup> When the time of war came in the summer of 1974, the overwhelming majority of Turks were eager to march against Greek Cypriots and, potentially, mainland Greeks as well. Their brothers in Cyprus, who had been neglected for years as a result of Kemalist ideology, were now assigned top priority for the Turkish state. Both the original invasion of July 20<sup>th</sup> and the eventual occupation of Northern Cyprus a month later were met with vivid patriotic enthusiasm from virtually every mainland Turk. As a result, Ecevit and

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<sup>64</sup> Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach*, (New York: Routledge: 2003), 57-61.

<sup>65</sup> Bozdağlıoğlu, "Constructivism and Identity Formation", 139-140.

<sup>66</sup> *Supra*, note 60.

everyone associated with the war were idolised, while confidence in democracy was restored.<sup>67</sup>

Legro has noted that “new foreign policy ideas are shaped by preexisting dominant ideas and their relationship to experienced events...”<sup>68</sup>. However, the existing dominant Turkish ideology does not seem to correspond neither to the political decision to invade Cyprus, nor to the patriotic fervor that the Turks displayed. Additionally, the historical and cultural ties between mainland and Cypriot Turks do not appear to have been strong enough to be considered as decisive factors behind the intervention in 1974. So, what changed? How could a western-oriented polity and a political leadership that was undoubtedly loyal to its alliances suddenly become overwhelmingly in favour of conducting military operations on the island and risk war with one of its NATO allies, Greece? The following sub-chapter attempts to answer this question from a different level of constructivist analysis.

### *Norms*

This section will be concerned with norms and the idea that state behaviour is determined by certain standards, set either by the international community or by domestic processes.<sup>69</sup> As we have already established, a new identity, which was associated with “western” political ideas, had gradually become dominant in Turkish society by the 1960s. Nonetheless, this same decade is also characterized by turbulence in the political field. After a brief period of military rule, the early years of the 1960s can be characterized by various state attempts at political liberalization, which created a broadened political spectrum. However, by the end of this decade the emergence of nationalist and Islamist parties led to severe fractionalization in parliament. Resulting from the above circumstances, dictatorial rule was effectively reinstated in 1971.

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<sup>67</sup> Fiona Adamson, ‘Democratization and the Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy: Turkey in the 1974 Cyprus Crisis’, *Political Science Quarterly* 116, no. 2 (summer, 2001): 289-291.

<sup>68</sup> Jeffrey Legro, *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order* (Cornell University Press, 2016), 4.

<sup>69</sup> March and Olsen, 22-24, 160-162.

When elections were held in 1973, the head of the Republic People's Party, Bulent Ecevit, was forced to form an incoherent coalition with two increasingly popular Islamic parties. The ideological chasm between members of this new government was only bridged by their common will to challenge U.S. influence over their country and adopt popular policies to gain people's support. Thus, in 1974, Ecevit's government and perhaps Turkish democracy in general were extremely vulnerable to societal demands<sup>70</sup>, the most popular of which was to intervene in Cyprus.<sup>71</sup>

It should also be noted that the year of 1963 was a defining point for Turkish foreign policy. The neutral stance that President Johnson took, in sight of the emerging Greek-Turkish antagonism, and more importantly, the strict warning to Turkey to refrain from any form of intervention on the island were not well received<sup>72</sup>. An increasing number of Turks began to wonder if their NATO allies were to be fully trusted. Nonetheless, throughout the 1960s, Turkey opted for an overall passive stance towards the developments in Cyprus, in fear that an intervention would undermine their western alliances.<sup>73</sup>

Around the same time, a new norm which favoured interventionism in favour of Turkish Cypriots had started to gain grounds in Turkish society. This development was primarily the result of a new nationalistic discourse, which revolved around "Kıbrıs davası" or "Cyprus cause". Nevertheless, their political leadership remained indifferent to Turkish Cypriots<sup>74</sup>, since the wellbeing of the latter was never really a priority in the state's agenda. Therefore, this perceived moral obligation in Turkish society to protect their Cypriot fell on deaf ears.

In 1974, however, the conditions were different, as the dream of "enosis" was close to becoming a reality for Greek Cypriots. Ecevit and his cabinet were completely aware of this

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<sup>70</sup> Adamson, 281-285.

<sup>71</sup> Adamson, 289-291.

<sup>72</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Turkish Reaction to President Johnson's Letter to Prime Minister Inonu", Field Report No: 12958, June 6, 1964, accessed July 16, 2020. [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0000615268.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000615268.pdf)

<sup>73</sup> Bozdağlıoğlu, *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity*, 66-67.

<sup>74</sup> Bryant and Hatay, 10-12.

prospect.<sup>75</sup> When Colonel Ioannidis, head of the Greek Junta, staged a coup against President Makarios of Cyprus, he involuntarily gave Ecevit the opportunity to unite his divided society under a common purpose: protecting the Turkish Cypriots from harm. Thus, we can assume that domestic politics in Turkey were relevant in regards to the invasion.

However, the same thing cannot be argued about domestic norms. Considering that the Turkish invasion was a direct response to the coup and by taking into account the fact that the norm of intervening in favour of Cypriots had previously been completely disregarded by the Turkish political elite, we can presume that it was not a determining factor for the invasion. Instead, two hypotheses seem more likely. According to the first one, Turkey was looking for an opportunity to become involved on the island for strategic reasons and did not care about protecting its compatriots. According to the second one, which is advanced by Ecevit, Turkey was forced to intervene and prevent the annexation of the island by Greece<sup>76</sup>. The fact that the Turkish government took advantage of the patriotic fervor of its people does not necessarily mean that the public's cravings for war had played a major role. Therefore, whether Sampson's dictatorship was the main cause or just a pretext for the Turkish invasion, domestic norms should likely not be considered a determining factor.

The next issue that will be discussed concerns international norms and their potential influence in Turkey's foreign policy. However, before I begin it is important to make a distinction between the original invasion on July 20, 1974 and the continuation of hostilities on August 14 of that same year. The reason is simple: while it can be argued that Turkey was adhering to international norms, by taking action against Greek-Cypriots and their coup, the continuation of hostilities, while the Geneva talks were taking place is harder to justify based on legal argumentation.<sup>77</sup>

Immediately after hearing the news about the coup against Makarios on July 15, 1974, Ecevit allegedly headed for Britain to persuade Prime Minister Harold Wilson about the need

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<sup>75</sup> BBC News Türkçe, "BBC'nin Kıbrıs harekâtıyla ilgili programı 44 yıl sonra ilk kez yayında", [BBC's program about the operations on Cyprus is on air for the first time in 44 years], YouTube video, posted July 20, 2018, 4:00-4:30. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cb\\_T9t4aKI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cb_T9t4aKI)

<sup>76</sup> Supra, note 71, 4:15-4:30.

<sup>77</sup> Craig R. Whitney, "Talks on Cyprus Collapse", *The New York Times*, August 14, 1974. <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/08/14/archives/talks-on-cyprus-collapse-british-accuse-the-turks-planes-reported.html>

to restore constitutional order on the island. In Ecevit's account, he decided to invade only upon grasping the British reluctance to get involved in Cyprus<sup>78</sup>. In reality, there is enough evidence to suggest that Wilson and his foreign minister, Callaghan, were aware of their legal obligation to intervene and were actually contemplating strategies that would allow them to reinstate Makarios.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, it is impossible to confidently conclude if those plans were even shared to Ecevit. Therefore, it is likely that as far as the latter was aware, the burden of protecting the constitutional order of the island has fallen on Turkey's shoulders.

As noted earlier, the Treaty of Guarantee did not only grant independence on the Republic of Cyprus. It also assigned Greece, Turkey and the Great Britain with overseeing duties, with the aim to protect the island's sovereignty and political integrity. The Junta's conspiracy to overthrow Makarios and replace him with Sampson was organized with the aim to incorporate the island into Greece's territory. In that sense it was in complete violation to the treaty's terms. Therefore, Turkey's decision to intervene was not only justified based on moral grounds and in terms of protecting the island's ethnic minority. It was also in accordance with Article II, which assigned Turkey the responsibility *'to prohibit...any activity aimed at promoting, directly or indirectly, either union of Cyprus with any other State or partition of the island'*.<sup>80</sup> The first phase of the invasion succeeded in doing just that. Only three days after Turkish troops stepped foot on Northern Cyprus, Ioannidis' regime in Athens collapsed under public pressure and soon after, so did their puppet regime on island<sup>81</sup>.

In the following week, the newly formed Greek and Cypriot governments under Karamanlis and Clerides respectively, declared their intentions to participate in the Geneva talks with the aim to restore peace and constitutional order in Cyprus. Nonetheless, Ecevit's government did not desire a restoration of the former state of affairs and thus, Turkey adopted a maximalist stance during the negotiations, despite the fact that Greek Cypriots no longer

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<sup>78</sup> BBC News Türkçe, 4:30-4:48 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cb\\_T9t4aKI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cb_T9t4aKI)

<sup>79</sup> Petros Savvides, "The Collapse of a Fallacious Myth: The Role of Kremlin and Whitehall in the Cyprus Crisis of 1974" in Michalis Kontos et al. ed. *Great Power Politics in Cyprus: Foreign Involvement and Domestic Perceptions*, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 99-100.

<sup>80</sup> "Treaty of Guarantee", see note 1

<sup>81</sup> Alvin Shuster, "Junta's Rule Ends", *The New York Times*, July 14, 1974 <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/07/24/archives/article-2-no-title-greek-junta-bids-civilians-resume-power.html>

represented a threat.<sup>82</sup> Eventually, peace talks came to a halt on August 14, when Turkey officially proposed the creation of a bi-zonal federal state. Clerides' motion to postpone negotiations for two days, in order to consult with his counterparts in Greece, was inexplicably denied by Turkey. Within hours of this request, Ecevit gave the order to his troops to advance towards the south.

It has been argued that modern Turkey's main foreign policy objective has always been to integrate with the west, either through alliances or economic and political agreements.<sup>83</sup> Some Turkish scholars have even gone as far as to claim that the "*legality of its actions in the international arena*" is one of the "*historical legacies that continue to contribute to Turkish foreign policy*"<sup>84</sup>. However, in order for these assertions to stand, Turkey needed to have built its foreign policy approach around strict adherence to international norms. On the one hand, the second phase of Turkish military operations resulted in a de-facto partition of the island and was in violation of the Republic of Cyprus' territorial integrity and sovereignty. On the other hand, Turkish diplomacy was not aiming at re-establishing the island's state of affairs but rather at establishing a significantly different state entity in its place<sup>85</sup>. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the international community took a stance against Turkish actions on the island<sup>86</sup> and openly declared its support towards the Republic of Cyprus' "*fundamental right to independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity*"<sup>87</sup>.

Even if a case can be made that Turkey was acting according to its legal commitments during the first stage of the invasion, as I have already pointed out, it is impossible to claim that the second part of its military operations can be justified based on adherence in international norms. On the contrary, their unwillingness to compromise during the Geneva

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<sup>82</sup> Adamson, 293-296.

<sup>83</sup> Bozdağlıoğlu, 69

<sup>84</sup> Aydın, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy", 180-181.

<sup>85</sup> Adamson, 294-295

<sup>86</sup> U.N. Security Council Resolution 367, March 12, 1975.  
<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/367>

<sup>87</sup> U.N. General Assembly, "Question of Cyprus", 65th<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting, November 1, 1974  
<https://undocs.org/en/a/res/31/12>

peace talks<sup>88</sup> and their subsequent military actions can be more adequately attributed to rational strategic planning. Additionally, their continued support towards the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, since its de-facto establishment back in 1983<sup>89</sup>, illustrates a long-term strategy on the island, which completely disregards both transnational law and international opinion.

In summary of the above chapters, there are domestic variables that should definitely be taken into account when attempting to explain the foreign policy of Turkey. Apart from that nonetheless, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that social constructs, including identity, ideology, ethnicity and norms, played a major role in determining Turkish foreign policy in regards to Cyprus back in 1974.

## **5. The annexation of Crimea by Russia**

### **5.1 Neorealist Analysis**

#### *Rationality*

Similarly to what was attempted in the theoretical analysis of the case of Cyprus, the aim of this chapter is to evaluate if Russia's foreign policy towards Ukraine and the eventual annexation of Crimea can be attributed to rational, strategic thinking. In this chapter I argue that Russia's annexation of Crimea was rationally timed, increased its standing in the Black Sea and enabled long term objectives.

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<sup>88</sup> Adamson, 294-295.

<sup>89</sup>Jonathan Gorvett, "As Divisions Harden, Is Time Running Out for Cyprus Reunification?", *World Politics Review*, April 2, 2019. <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/insights/27724/as-divisions-harden-is-time-running-out-for-cyprus-reunification>

To begin with, it is important to note that Russia chose to move against Ukraine only after Yanukovich was ousted. There is no doubt that disgraced former president had valuable for Moscow, in terms of advancing their interests in Ukraine. As an example, in April, 2010, only months after being elected, Yanukovich shook hands with his counterpart, Dmitri Medvedev, and agreed to extend the lease of a major Russian military naval base in Sevastopol, which was due to expire in 2017.<sup>90</sup> This arrangement contradicted the demands of Yanukovich' domestic opposition and went completely against the anti-Russian approach that his predecessor Viktor Yushchenko had followed from 2005 to 2010. However, this was not the last time that Yanukovich would push his country towards Russia's zone of influence. On June 2010, his government passed a bill that prohibited Ukraine from joining any military bloc, thus putting an end at his predecessor's attempts to push the country towards NATO membership.<sup>91</sup> Finally, as one his last acts, he turned down the E.U association agreement and instead opted to sign a \$15 billion bailout from Russia. Even though the loan would alleviate some of Ukraine's financial troubles, it would also provide Russia with a significant leverage over the country. A strategic association agreement was also signed between the two countries, on December 17, 2013, which did not include particularly favourable terms for Ukraine.<sup>92</sup>

Western observers have repeatedly attempted to present Putin as irrational, describing his actions as rushed or fuelled by anger<sup>93</sup>. However, the reality is much different. There is evidence to suggest that annexation of Crimea was a calculated and premeditated move that was taking place during the final days of Yanukovich' presidency.<sup>94</sup> Whether the removal of

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<sup>90</sup> Ivan Watson and Maxim Tkachenko, "Russia, Ukraine agree on naval-base-for-gas deal", *CNN*, August 21, 2010. <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/europe/04/21/russia.ukraine/index.html?hpt=T2>

<sup>91</sup> Ukraine's parliament votes to abandon NATO ambitions, *BBC News*, June 3, 2010. <https://www.bbc.com/news/10229626>

<sup>92</sup> Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk, *Ukraine between the EU and Russia: The Integration Challenge*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 85, 90-92.

<sup>93</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, "Is Putin Having a Brezhnev Moment?", *Politico*, March 11, 2014. <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/03/putin-brezhnev-moment-crimea-104547#.UyF6pYUyX3w>

<sup>94</sup> "Vladimir Putin describes secret meeting when Russia decided to seize Crimea", *The Guardian*, March 9, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/09/vladimir-putin-describes-secret-meeting-when-russia-decided-to-seize-crimea>

the latter was just a pretext or the main cause behind the events in Crimea is irrelevant. In either case, Russia can be seen as a rational actor. This view will also be advanced on the following section.

This view is also supported by taking into account Igor Delanoë's analysis of Russia's maritime interests in the Black Sea, which indicates the power-politics approach. Delanoë characterizes the incorporation of Crimea as "a game changer", since it has allowed Russia's hegemony over Eastern Europe to extend to the Black Sea. This is owed to a number of reasons. First of all, the annexation of the peninsula in 2014, as well as the military occupation of Abkhazia, have considerably enlarged Russia's coastline border and provided additional safe harbours for Russian vessels. Total control over Crimea has also allowed Russia to significantly enlarge its military presence in the region, without being constrained by any bilateral agreements with Ukraine.<sup>95</sup> Finally, the incorporation of the peninsula has resulted in a noteworthy increase in terms of Russia's continental shelf, which in turn means that Russia effectively gained exclusive drillings rights over rich natural gas and oil fields underneath the Black Sea.<sup>96</sup>

The aforementioned strategic benefits, as well as any economic profits that will be generated from extracting those hydrocarbon resource, advance Russia's national interest. Moreover, Russia's attempts to increase its standing in the Black Sea relate to larger schemes, incepted by its political leadership. Delanoë believes that Russia is constantly looking for opportunities to go beyond its regional hegemony and attempt to influence affairs in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, both of which have become more accessible to the Russian navy, due to the aforementioned developments.<sup>97</sup> Although his analysis is not based on neorealism, it corresponds to the power-maximizing stance that great powers adopt, according to offensive realists like Mearsheimer. Although it already is powerful, Russia adopts offensive strategies in order to constantly augment its power and ensure its survival. When presented with a pretext, which in this case was the alleged coup against Yanukovich, it took advantage of the millions of ethnic Russians residing in Crimea and successfully

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<sup>95</sup> Igor Delanoë, "After the Crimean crisis: towards a greater Russian maritime power in the Black Sea", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 14, no.3 (2014): 375.

<sup>96</sup> Delanoë, 376

<sup>97</sup> Delanoë, 370

staged the infamous referendum of March 16, 2014. Just two days later, Russia annexed the peninsula.

We can judge those aforementioned gains by Russia as relative ones, a view which corresponds to the view of structural realists. Specifically, Mearsheimer has argued that anarchy and the constant security competition that it entails force states to seek relative gains.<sup>98</sup> In simple terms, this means that, due to the limited amount of territory and resources, states extract gains at the expense of others. Waltz also recognizes that power competition between rival powers or alliances is often a zero-sum game: “a gain for any one state became a gain for its side, and simultaneously a loss for the other”<sup>99</sup>. The hostile relationships of Russia with NATO and since 2014, Ukraine, are ones that are defined by power competition. Overall, the acquisition of territory and energy resources, as well as the tremendous strategic benefits that have resulted from the annexation of Crimea, suggest that Russia’s actions were rational.

### *Anarchy and self-help*

In the previous section, it was established that the incorporation of the peninsula into Russia can be considered rational and therefore it corresponds to realist theories. In this subchapter, I will attempt to examine in particular whether structural conditions determined Russia’s actions.

As mentioned in the literature review, Mearsheimer believes that the international system is characterized by anarchy and by the attempts of great powers to maximize their power and achieve hegemony. Mearsheimer’s analysis in regards to the events in Crimea, back in 2014, is consistent with his theoretical claims. Russia’s behaviour, after the removal of Yanukovich, is judged by the neorealist scholar not only as rational, but also as perfectly

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<sup>98</sup>, John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War." *International Security* 15, no. 1 (1990), 44-45.

<sup>99</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War; a Theoretical Analysis*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 219

justifiable since “great powers are always sensitive to threats near their home territory”.<sup>100</sup> In his article he attributes three reasons behind Russia’s insecurity: NATO’s continuous enlargement over the past decades, EU’s efforts to expand its political and economic influence in Eastern Europe and finally the promotion of western values in Ukraine.<sup>101</sup> All the aforementioned developments can be attributed to a “flawed view of international politics”, which led the political leaderships of U.S. and E.U into adopting overambitious goals. Russia responded by annexing Crimea and proved to international observers that “realpolitik remains relevant”, according to Mearsheimer.<sup>102</sup>

Among these three reasons for concern, NATO expansion towards the Balkans and Eastern Europe can be seen as the most troublesome development for Russia. A few years before the annexation of Crimea, Russia had decided to go to war with Georgia, following the outbreak of a pro-Russian separatist rebellion in South Ossetia. The Russian army invaded Georgia on August 7, 2008, eventually bringing the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia under military occupation. This drastic action was partially taken as a result of Georgia’s intentions to join NATO, a notion that has been verified by former Russian President, Medvedev.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, in a sense, Russia had set a precedent by intervening in Georgia and preventing the country from joining the U.S.-led alliance.

The prospect of NATO admitting Ukraine and Georgia as members has been discussed for years. However, both countries were rejected in the crucial summit of 2008. This was due to fears expressed by Britain, Germany and France, all of whom were reluctant to accept Ukraine or Georgia in their ranks, in fear that this would provoke a reaction by Russia.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, even during Yushchenko’s years in power, when Ukraine was actively pursuing to enter the alliance at the United States’ request, it was unable to become a NATO member. The shift of policy that occurred after Yanukovich was elected effectively

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<sup>100</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin”, *Foreign Affairs* 93, no.5 (September-October 2014): 82.

<sup>101</sup> Mearsheimer, 80

<sup>102</sup> Mearsheimer, 78

<sup>103</sup> Denis Dyomkin, “Russia says Georgia war stopped NATO expansion”, *Reuters*, November 21, 2011. <https://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-60645720111121>

<sup>104</sup> NATO denies Georgia and Ukraine, *BBC News*, April 3, 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7328276.stm>

minimized the chances of Ukraine joining the alliance, as evident by the statements of Anders Fogh Rasmussen, just a few months before the Crimean crisis. According to the Secretary General of NATO, the door of the alliance was indeed open to both Ukraine and Georgia. Nevertheless, he admitted that the stance of Yanukovich, who advocated for a “non-bloc policy”, prevented anything more than partial cooperation with Ukraine.<sup>105</sup>

This last statement reveals that under a different leadership, there is chance that Ukrainian integration into the Euro-Atlantic military alliance would have been possible. Accordingly, we can deduce that as long as Yanukovich and his government remained in power, the ties between Ukraine and NATO would likely not have been considerably strengthened. This could explain Russia’s choice to act when Yanukovich’ downfall was near. If its interventionist role in Georgia had indeed stopped the country from entering the alliance, it is possible that the annexation of Crimea had a similar effect for Ukraine. After all, despite the fact that Petro Poroshenko, publicly declared his government’s intentions to join the alliance back in 2017<sup>106</sup>, minimal progress has been made, as of yet. While it could be argued that Ukraine had been unable to join NATO in 2008 as well, it is exactly this fear of Russian aggression that had made E.U. states reluctant to accept Ukraine in the alliance.

The expansion of NATO and western interests in Ukraine has forced Russia to push back. Vladimir Putin himself, during his address in the Russian parliament and only moments before he signed the documents that officially incorporated Crimea into the Russian Federation, said the following: “Russia found itself in a position it could not retreat from. If you compress the spring all the way to its limit, it will snap back hard”.<sup>107</sup> Whether the international system today is still unipolar, as Waltz argued 20 years ago, or whether the U.S. military and political dominance is close to reaching its end, the lack of self-restraint and the continuous interventionist policies of the U.S. over the past decades have created valid

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<sup>105</sup> Anders Fogh Rasmussen. “Press conference by the NATO Secretary General and Chairman of the NATO-Russia Council”, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, October 23, 2013 [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions\\_104379.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_104379.htm)

<sup>106</sup> “Ukraine wants membership plan talks, says Poroshenko”, BBC News, July 10, 2017.: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40557477>

<sup>107</sup> Vladimir, Putin, “Address by President of the Russian Federation”, March 18, 2014. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>

reasons for security concerns to Russia.<sup>108</sup> In Putin's view, the lack of balance in the world has allowed the U.S. to dominate global affairs, based on their military strength and coalitions.<sup>109</sup>

In a system with an aggressive dominant pole, Russia was thus compelled to adopt self-help, preventive strategies to secure its interests in Ukraine. Whether its attempts will prove successful in the long run is irrelevant to the aims of this thesis. Overall, it can be deduced that neorealism provides a sufficient depiction of the annexation of Crimea based on structural factors.

## 5.2. Constructivist Analysis

### *Ideas*

During his presidential address in front of members of the Russian parliament and representatives of Crimea and Sevastopol, Vladimir Putin made an extensive speech to justify Russia's involvement in Ukraine and remind his audience of the special bonds that exist between the two neighbouring countries. Considering the vital role that social constructions play in the theory of constructivism, the following section will examine these ethnic and historical ties and the emotional associations that they entail.

Putin's speech begins through a brief historical overview of the ties between Russians and Ukrainians; specifically their common origins from the medieval kingdom of Kiev Rus and their friendly coexistence from the Soviet years up to the modern day<sup>110</sup>. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, almost all Ukrainians were subjects of the Tsarist Russian Empire. Their designation as "Little Russians" reveals both the ethnic association with the Russian people and the

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<sup>108</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security* 25, no. 1, (Summer 2000): 27-29

<sup>109</sup> *Supra*, note 103

<sup>110</sup> *Supra*, note 103

demeaning manner by which they were looked at by the Tsarist state. It was only after Bolsheviks seized power that Ukrainians began to be recognized as a separate nation, although they remained under Soviet rule until 1991.<sup>111</sup>

Apart from the historical ties that exist between Ukrainians and Russians, there are even stronger ethnic ties between Russians and their compatriots that have resided in Ukraine, after the Soviet Union's dissolution to separate states. In 2014, the population of Crimea was ethnically diverse, with Russian residents being the majority. According to figures extracted from the 2001 official population census, the most recent one performed by the state of Ukraine, 58% of the population of Crimea identified themselves as ethnic Russians.<sup>112</sup> Additionally, a 2013 survey that was conducted on the region has shown that the overwhelming majority of Crimean people speak Russian as their first language.<sup>113</sup>

Overall, it should come as no surprise that most residents of Crimea looked favourably upon the intervening role that Russia played during the months that followed the Euromaidan protests, considered the results of the referendum as accurate and expected to enjoy a better quality of life under Russian rule.<sup>114</sup> While the conditions under which the referendum was held were far from ideal, all evidence suggest that the majority of the residents of Crimea were indeed in favour of seceding from Ukraine and welcomed the annexation of their region by Russia on March 18, 2014.

In the previous chapter I explained the reasons why Russia's foreign policy must be considered as rational. However, contrary to neorealist arguments, some argue that the country's attitude in the international arena over the past two decades has not been defined by rationality but rather from a constant fear that engulfs its political leadership.<sup>115</sup> This fear is

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<sup>111</sup> Andreas Kappeler, "Ukraine and Russia: Legacies of the imperial past and competing memories", *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 5, (2014): 109-110

<sup>112</sup> State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, "All-Ukrainian population census 2001" <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/>

<sup>113</sup> "Public Opinion Survey Residents of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea May 16 – 30, 2013", *Baltic Surveys Ltd. and The Gallup Organization*, 39

<sup>114</sup> BBG Gallup, "Newsgathering and Policy Perceptions in Ukraine", *Broadcasting Board of Governors*, April 1, 2014, 27-30

<sup>115</sup> Tuomas Forsberg and Regina Heller and Reinhard Wolf, "Status and Emotions in Russian Foreign Policy.", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47, no. 3-4 (2014): 261-262

owed to a perceived loss of great power status, since the end of the Cold War, and over the years it has evolved into an obsession to prove to western observers that Russia's power should not be underestimated. In a sense, Russia has committed itself in a quest to increase its status and earn the respect of international audiences and thus, accumulating power is not an end by itself but rather the means to achieve this principal objective. Considering that this hypothetical behaviour is driven by emotion, rather than logic, and by taking into account that "status" is undoubtedly a social construct<sup>116</sup>, constructivist theories can potentially explain Russia's foreign policy based on this idea. Since this thesis deals exclusively with the case of Crimea in 2014, I will evaluate the aforesaid claim primarily in regards to the annexation of the peninsula and refrain from examining it in relation to previous or following events.

During his parliamentary address on March 18, 2014, Vladimir Putin called upon U.S. and their allies to accept that "Russia is an independent, active participant in international affairs; like other countries, it has its own national interests that need to be taken into account and respected."<sup>117</sup> While there is evidence to suggest that its political leadership wants the world to treat Russia as a major power, it is difficult to argue that this was the main motivating factor behind their actions in Ukraine. After all, few can argue that Russia had not achieved the status of a great power in the eyes of international observers before its actions in 2014. American academics that criticized western involvement in Ukraine were obviously aware of Russia's hegemonic role in Eastern Europe and the implications of NATO enlargement to great power competition.<sup>118</sup> While the acquisition of a great power status may be important for Russia, this objective likely has more to do with the benefits that come with it, in terms of security, rather than the title itself.

## *Norms*

Previously, I presented an overview of the ties that existed between Russia and the people of Crimea in 2014 and established that the results of the referendum of March 16 are overall indicative of the popular will of the latter. In this section I will first attempt to answer

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<sup>116</sup> Forsberg and Heller and Wolf, 263

<sup>117</sup> Putin, "Address by President of Russian Federation"  
<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>

<sup>118</sup> Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault"

whether the desire for secession and assimilation by Russia was strong enough to constitute a domestic norm and most importantly, whether that norm was actually what dictated the decision of Russian political leadership to intervene. Afterwards, I will assess Russia's actions in relation to international norms.

As previously mentioned, constructivists believe that norms can potentially have a major influence on the behaviour of states. Nonetheless, in order for that to occur, a sufficient number of people need to internalize and adhere to that norm, along with the moral obligations that it entails. Considering that Russians in Crimea were overwhelmingly in favour of reuniting with their motherland, we can assume that at one point or another, a norm which favoured secession from Ukraine had emerged and had gradually been established among this population group. Similarly, there are strong indications that the citizens of Russia felt strongly in favour of incorporating Crimea, which in turn led to a significant boost in Putin's popularity in the country.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, the emotional association of Russians with Crimea and its people, fuelled by their perceptions about identity and their shared historical past, could perhaps have led the state to adopt this expansionist approach.

Among numerous justifications that Vladimir Putin has used, in regards to his country's actions in Ukraine, two of them are relevant to this section of my thesis. On the one hand, the Russian president claimed that his compatriots, who were residing in Crimea, were supposedly in grave danger, due to the rise of a nationalistic government in Kiev. On the other hand, he spoke of a "historical injustice" in regards to the fact that Ukraine had remained in control of Crimea for so many years. According to the logic of appropriateness, state policies are frequently dictated by norms and rules that establish certain moral duties for political actors. Can we confidently prove that Russia became morally obligated to intervene in Ukraine for the aforementioned reasons?

While the first claim deserves little attention, since there is no evidence of "terror, murder and riots" employed specifically against Russians of Crimea, the second one should be more closely examined, as it relates to Russian nationalism. First of all, it should be noted that Russian nationalists have traditionally criticized their state's reluctance to conduct pre-emptive operations, in order to advance its interests abroad. However, there appears to be no

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<sup>119</sup> Sophie Pinkham, "How annexing Crimea allowed Putin to claim he had made Russia great again", *The Guardian*, March 22, 2017  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/22/annexing-crimea-putin-make-russia-great-again>

direct influence of this group in foreign policy-making of Russia. On the contrary, Russian foreign policy makers have been characterized as fairly conservative in their approach, with the exceptions of Georgia in 2008 and Crimea in 2014. Additionally, despite the fact that over the past decades a new nationalist discourse has taken shape within the country, based on the premise of a “divided Russian nation”, it should not be necessarily linked with Russia’s actions against Ukraine in 2014. If there is indeed a nationalist norm emerging in Russian society, advocating for more interventions and reunifications with minorities abroad, it only appears to be sporadically relevant. This indicates that Russian political leadership adheres to this norm only when it coincides with their already thought-out plans.<sup>120</sup> Thus, even if this domestic norm exists, it only serves as an occasional justification and it has no determining influence on the decisions of the political elite.

Wendt’s approach towards norms is more applicable to this particular case. The constructivist scholar recognizes that there are instances where states follow norms, with the sole aim to advance their own interests. In that sense, Russia took advantage of the emerging desire for Crimean independence amongst the residents of the peninsula and secretly took action to take advantage of the circumstances. While this is arguably a more plausible scenario than the one advanced by March and Olsen’s theory, it also implies that Russia only adhered to the norm that favoured intervention because it corresponded to its strategic objectives, which have already been mentioned in the previous chapter. Overall, it appears that domestic norms within Russia were not the determining factor behind the decision to annex Crimea.

Moving on to examining international norms, I will first briefly engage with the legality of the referendum of March 16, 2014, which presented voters with the options to reunify Crimea with the Russian Federation or to restore its status, as part of Ukraine. Overall, there are conflicting legal opinions in regards to the right to self-determination in cases of seceding territories, with national and international courts not always reaching the same verdict. On the contrary, international law clearly prohibits any declaration of independence that is related to illegal use of force, similar to what occurred in Crimea on

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<sup>120</sup> Marlene Laruelle, “Russia as a ‘Divided Nation’, from Compatriots to Crimea: A Contribution to the Discussion on Nationalism and Foreign Policy”, *Problems of Post-Communism* 62, no.2 (2015): 89, 90, 94.

March 11.<sup>121</sup> Despite the fact that Russia initially denied accusations that its troops were present during the crisis in Crimea, after more than enough evidence to the contrary surfaced, Putin eventually admitted that there was indeed Russian military presence in Ukraine.<sup>122</sup> Accordingly, both the referendum and the invasion of Russian troops in Crimea during the same month were almost unanimously criticized as illegitimate by the international community.<sup>123</sup>

Overall, despite the fact that Putin is correct to point out that the majority of people in Crimea wanted to join Russia, his country's actions were clearly infringing on Ukraine's sovereignty. If his state was indeed acting in accordance with international norms, it could have pursued the path of diplomacy, instead of dispatching unmarked soldiers to occupy administrative buildings and aid the processes of an arguably illegitimate referendum. Instead, his plans to grab the peninsula, which were already in motion since February<sup>124</sup>, most likely had more to do with fulfilling strategic objectives than satisfying the will of the Crimean people.

## 6. Comparative Assessment

The literature review and the empirical chapters of this thesis have demonstrated that the theories under examination tend to explain state behaviour by emphasizing on different factors. Due to their dissimilar scopes of analysis, realist and constructivist theories have traditionally been seen as contrasting approaches in International Relations. Samuel Barkin

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<sup>121</sup> Majid Nikouei and Masoud Zamani, "The Secession of Crimea: Where Does International Law Stand?", *Nordic Journal of International Law/ Acta Scandinavica Juris Gentium* 85, no. 1 (2016): 54-56.

<sup>122</sup> Shaun Walker, "Putin admits Russian military presence in Ukraine for the first time", *The Guardian*, December 17, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/17/vladimir-putin-admits-russian-military-presence-ukraine>

<sup>123</sup> Nikouei and Zamani, 41-42.

<sup>124</sup> "Putin reveals secrets of Russia's Crimea takeover plot", *BBC*, March 9, 2015. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31796226#>

has made noteworthy efforts to correct this fallacy and bring attention to the need for more pluralistic theoretical approaches in the study of politics.<sup>125</sup> Specifically, in reference to realist and constructivist theories, he argues that there is some overlap and that either theory can complement the findings of the other, during what can be perceived as a two-dimensional approach of a case. Nonetheless, while he contends that classical realism can hypothetically be linked to constructivism, neorealism is deemed as practically incompatible with the social theory.<sup>126</sup>

While it may be impossible for the two selected theories to be subsumed by one another, they can provide alternative explanations about similar cases, which allows for a more elaborate examination of all the underlying factors. This is what this thesis has set out to accomplish. Regardless, the process of theory testing on these particular case studies also allows us to evaluate the explanatory power of the two frameworks.

As already evident by the individual case studies, neorealism sufficiently explains both the Turkish invasion in Cyprus and the Russian annexation of Crimea. The observable implications of the theory are verified in both cases, since the political leaderships of either state use rational thinking and self-help methods to protect its interests. Additionally, it was observed that the operations of both states can be understood as reactions to perceived external threats. Bearing the above statement in mind and by taking into account that Turkey of 1974 and Russia of 2014 are very dissimilar in terms of their capabilities, we can deduce that security concerns cannot be significantly alleviated in an anarchic environment. Even though Russia is arguably a great power, it still feels insecure in sight of a ruthless NATO expansion eastwards. In that sense, its rationale is not much different than that of Turkey's back in 1974. The prospect of a nationalist Greek-Cypriot regime, so close to Turkish southern shores and the idea of Cyprus unifying with Greece were as detrimental for Turkey as the prospect of a westernised Ukraine would be for Russia's economic and geopolitical interests.

Nonetheless, an approach that is so absorbed with system level analysis is bound to disregard domestic factors and their influence to foreign policy making. Existing constructivist literature allowed us to look at identities and ideologies, as well as norms of

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<sup>125</sup> Samuel Barkin, *Realist Constructivism*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 162-165.

<sup>126</sup> Barkin, 166-167.

behaviour, as influencing factors behind Turkish and Russian actions. Nevertheless, after assessing the qualitative findings which were generated from in-depth analyses of the cases, it becomes apparent that societal demands in Turkey and Russia did not have a major impact on the decisions of the political elite.

In short, whether based on ideas or norms, the theory of constructivism is less able to locate the determining factors behind the two cases, compared to neorealism. On the contrary, neorealism delivers convincing explanations in regards to the aims of the aforementioned countries, namely the pursuit of their national interest.

## 7. Conclusion

Today, 6 years after “little green men” suddenly appeared in Crimean streets<sup>127</sup>, the peninsula is still firmly in Russia’s grasp, while sporadic fighting between pro-Russian rebel forces and the Ukrainian army still occurs in the region of Donbas. Meanwhile, despite the fact that we are nearing the 50 year mark since the Turkish invasion, the island of Cyprus remains divided, with a de-facto state ruling its northern lands and no reunification plan in sight.

Before events in Cyprus and Crimea unfolded, constructed ideas had given rise to popular demands in Turkey and Russia. When the latter two countries eventually became involved in conflicts against Greek Cypriots and Ukrainians, those voices that had called for intervention were satisfied. Thus, in these particular cases, social constructs give the illusion of relevance, as they appear to have a strong, albeit indirect, influence over foreign policy making.

However, as the saying goes, even a broken clock is right twice a day. Upon closer inspection, ideas and norms appear to lack consistency in terms of influencing decision-making in Turkey and Russia. Instead, the events that were under examination are prompted by external threats, occur based on rational thinking and are aimed towards safeguarding the interests of the aggressors.

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<sup>127</sup> Vitaly Shevchenko, “‘Little green men’ or ‘Russian invaders’?”, *BBC News*, March 11, 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26532154>

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