

# How the Federal Republic Reacted to Russia's Annexation of Crimea: Berlin's Diplomatic Response and German Media Representations in 2014–2020

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**Abstract:** *Six years after the annexation of Crimea, this article seeks to analyze the dynamics of Germany's diplomatic response to the annexation of Crimea and its representation in leading German newspapers. An in-depth examination of the German response to the annexation is of special interest given the peculiar challenge faced by Germany which was reconciling the country's "multilateralism first" strategy and long-lasting legacy of Ostpolitik ("Eastern Policy"). Through discourse analysis of the official documents and selected media texts, this article shows that the German response has involved an attempt to disentangle Berlin's condemnation of the annexation of Crimea and involvement in attempts at conflict resolution in terms of its "multilateralism first" strategy, on the one hand, and Germany's "special relationship" with Russia, which was of increased importance in view of new developments in transatlantic relations, on the other. Moreover, Berlin's response to the annexation of Crimea is illustrative of the hybrid nature of contemporary Ostpolitik that, inter alia, aims to strengthen Germany's resilience vis-à-vis Russia while also continuing German–Russian cooperation.*

**Keywords:** annexation of Crimea; Germany; Ostpolitik; "multilateralism first" strategy.

## Introduction

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its subsequent use of a hybrid war strategy in Eastern Ukraine gave a strong impetus to a