

Review of: "The Russian Invasion of Ukraine in the United States National Security Strategy: A Geopolitical Approach From Neoclassical Realism"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article needs a wider view. Realism, as measuring tradeoffs, should also consider the impact of the war in Gaza: too much US support of Ukraine imperils US standing in the Pacific, so what to do in regards to Gaza? Moreover, what to do about US global commitments?

The article can nicely set up the ongoing tension in realism and liberalism, as the article just about does – can the USA turn away from the war in Ukraine without a moral cost, so a loss of credibility, that move promising a negative impact on coalition partners in Europe, and, therefore, a blow to US standing in the Pacific with partners there. So tradeoffs, as per realism, always entail additional costs to weigh in the decision.

The US and domestic politics need clarity; a large section of the Republican Party sides with Putin and favors a US disengagement with Ukraine. This reality counters the view in the article of US bipartisan support of Ukraine.

A good question to ask is if US policy in Ukraine is consistent with US national security. In the respect of seeking allies and partners across the globe to counter Russia and China, that support is consistent. So this question, central to the article, needs clarity.

Weakening Russia would be a realist end; I suppose, as the article suggests, keeping Russia strong to counter China can work as realism, but then how to posture the threat Russia poses to Europe? The article accepts this threat as needed to better support Russia?

Realism as a theory is always in question, much as liberalism is (Note 4). It remains but a theory.

Policy 'decision makers' plays better than 'elites.' If 'elites' is desired, explain/defend why this label. And, in lieu of both, I would use specific names.

The Russian map of Mackinder is now obsolete? I would stress this point or refine the point you wish to make. What once drove realism, the geographic spacing, can or cannot work now – certainly needs an update given cyber, space, nukes, globalization. And Russia was central to the world during the Mackinder evaluation, a mind map that can no longer hold or should be reemphasized? Or this would constitute old thinking, and nothing is more dangerous than embracing old thinking in a modern age – the thinking was problematic then and may or may not work now.

Is the USA successfully calibrating the threat of China? That is a good realism measure.

Europe is always critical to US national security; many could argue Europe is the most important place in the world. So how best to understand what Europe represents in the world today? So you are saying, today, the Pacific is the most important region?

There was a time, 2003, when stopping aggression drove the realism of waging war in Iraq. To throw out this rationale of stopping aggression, to cast that aim as liberalism, that contradiction should be explained.

And aligning Russia and China, more driving them onto each other to see tensions, at least, and a wedge grow between them, that would be good realism.

To drive a power out of the international power group, as the article claims the USA seeks to do to Russia, that, again, would be good realism – effacing an adversary and eliminating them from the map, i.e., contention, a good goal as per realism.

The Russian imperial reconstruction, that aim would weigh similar merits of realism and liberalism, so offering a view of this impact is needed.

China will then do what with a diminished Russia?

And returning to where things started, a better US policy toward Ukraine aligns with US national security in that...how? Containment? That appears to be the logical end of the article. And, if so, is containment a means of realism?

Overall, to defend realism as the best way to set US policy in Ukraine is a good question to raise. Not sure I would then declare that realism can set the way forward. That distinction is worth emphasizing in the article.

