

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

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This article is not without interest in the way it refers back to, and summarizes, some classic conceptions of geopolitics, realism, and neoclassical realism (although the latter two arguably incompletely and not very helpfully). It also makes some useful observations about *some* shaping factors of US foreign policy, in particular how the policy elite's "mental map" emerges. It then makes a case that this mental map has influenced the way in which US policy on Ukraine has diverged from its actual national interests and argues an alternative needs to be explored, in particular, an armistice and a negotiated solution. The trouble is (1) that the various components of the article don't really hang together very compellingly; (2) that there is a great deal more to be said theoretically about factors driving policy, both in, say, constructivist IR literature, in FPA literature, in swathes of US foreign policy literature, and in some recent work on Russian foreign policy (not least Angela Stent, say), and the Russian-Ukrainian war (e.g., Phillips O'Brien); (3) that there is nothing truly new either empirically or theoretically here; and (4) that no account is taken of Russia's own ideational and domestic political factors shaping Putin's policy on Ukraine and his wider policy towards European actors – at least not in ways which would engage with the question whether negotiating an acceptable resolution of the conflict is even a realistic prospect. In all, I found much of interest as I was reading through the article, but it did not in the end slake my theoretical or empirical – or indeed policy – thirst: the basic questions "how does it all hang together," "what have I learned," or "what does this tell the reader (s)he wouldn't already know" remain without the sort of compelling answer that a peer-reviewed article as "original scholarship" usually requires. This seems more like an initial discussion prompt for a workshop, and from there might become a good base for subsequent work.