Salome Tsereteli

Transatlantic Studies-M.A. Dissertation Evaluation

Theory in Practice: Applying IR Approaches to NATO-Georgia Relations

2018

Salome Tsereteli has selected the relationship between NATO and Georgia as the topic of her M.A. thesis. Salome’s stated goal has been to examine the issue within the context of theories of international relations. Dr. Petr Anděl, who wrote his doctoral dissertation on NATO expansion and continues to be very well informed about the subject, supervised her. In fact, Petr helped me to conceive and, above all, accredit the Transatlantic Studies program. The work itself consists of an Introduction (Chapter 1), four main chapters (Chapters 2-5), and a Conclusion (Chapter 6). I will offer my comments on each individual section in the paragraphs that follow.

In the Introduction (Chapter 1), Salome does precisely what is expected, namely spell out the aim and structure of the thesis. Her research question is: “Which of the dominant IR theories provides the most comprehensive explanation of the evolution of NATO-Georgia relations since the end of the Cold War?” The work represents a qualitative comparative analysis. The Introduction is fine, but I think there should be a section evaluating literature and sources.

Chapter 2 deals with the theoretical framework. The theories of neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism, and social constructivism are explained in detail and are placed in the context of NATO enlargement and the issues associated with it. This
chapter is important because it elucidates the advantages and shortcomings of each theory.

In Chapter 3, Salome discusses the United States position on NATO enlargement. The American standpoint evolved in line with the changing circumstances of the international situation. Salome’s historical analysis is sound and she demonstrates her knowledge of the essential facts. I have no problem here.

Chapter 4 is an analysis of the Soviet Union’s position concerning NATO enlargement, which obviously differed to that of the United States. As in the preceding chapter, Salome points out the reasons behind Russia’s objections and her citations serve as evidence that she has read the relevant literature and tackled the issues involved.

Georgia’s attitude toward NATO enlargement forms the subject of Chapter 5. Salome begins with the unique history of Georgia and the country’s Christian heritage. She provides a historical overview of the post-Cold War years and her understanding of the background to the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008. She points out that the theories of IR do not explain why Georgia adopted a pro-Western stance despite the fact that there was no substantial Western backing for the country’s aspirations. This chapter is well argued.

In Chapter 6 (Conclusion), Salome summarizes her main points. The Russian attitude towards NATO enlargement can best be explained through the realist paradigm. On the other hand, the American stance needs to be examined through the use of multiple theoretical approaches. When it comes to the Georgian position, the social constructivist theoretical approach is most applicable.
Overall, I am impressed with the dissertation. Certain grammatical errors and other problems of presentation are understandable as Salome is not a native speaker of English. Also, as mentioned above, a separate section on literature and sources in the Introduction would have made Chapter 1 more complete. I recommend an EXCELLENT classification (B) conditional upon an impressive oral defense.

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