

How a Realist-Constructivist Theory Can Contribute to Understanding the 2014 Ukraine Crisis

Abstract

Realism has been the predominant paradigm for analysing Russian foreign policy in recent times, however, it can sometimes appear lacking in convincing power. Constructivism offers some explanation for the motivation behind policy, however, again appears lacking in convincing power alone. Realist-constructivism has been suggested to bridge the gap, as it were, between traditional notions of power, and cultural influences. The main argument for realist-constructivism is that some of the basic principles of realism must have a constructivist base, for example, in order to define the 'us' and 'them' in international politics and to determine with whom one is competing for power and influence, there first must be an understanding of how one defines the 'us'. This analysis examines the realistconstructivist theory as put forward by Barkin (2004; 2010), analyses its advantages and disadvantages, and seeks to view the Ukraine crisis of 2014 through a realist-constructivist lens, hoping to contribute something to the still young and developing discussion around a realist-constructivist theory.

Keywords

Realist-constructivist theory; NATO; national identity; Ukraine; Crimea; the EU; 2014; annexation