

PROGRESS REPORT
(600 words minimum)

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Term:

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Academic year:

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Dissertation title:

What does a realist-constructivist approach contribute to the understanding of Russian foreign policy? A case study of the 2014 Russian action in Ukraine and Crimea

Expected date of submitting:

May

Head of the Seminar:

doc. PhDr. Jiri Vykoukal

Supervisor:

PhDr. Jan Sir

Topic changes (why):

New title (if):

What does a realist-constructivist approach contribute to the understanding of Russian foreign policy? A case study of the 2014 Russian action in Ukraine and Crimea

Research question changes (why):

I've chosen to focus on the policy level rather than at the level of the public in terms of the growth of nationalism in Russia and its influence on the action in Ukraine. My readings led me to the realist-constructivist approach which seems better suited to an analysis of policy decisions influenced by both inter-state relations and societal pressures, but the inter-state relations are more significant in terms of power politics which affect the policy level, rather than the public. This also led me to more questions about strategy in the international sphere rather than at the domestic level, which I found more interesting and compelling in terms of understanding the action undertaken in Crimea.

New research question/ (if):

What is the interpretation and understanding of the Russian annexation of Crimea when a realist-constructivist theoretical approach is applied?

New sources (comment, please, on the source base):

Theoretical material: particularly J.S. Barkin, Realist Constructivism: Rethinking International Relations Theory, Cambridge, CUP, 2010; P.T. Jackson (ed.), Bridging the Gap: Toward a Realist-Constructivist Dialogue, International Studies Review, 6:2, 2004, pp. 337-352; and H. Mouritzen, Combining "Incompatible" Foreign Policy Explanations: How a Realist Can Borrow from Constructivism, Journal of International Relations and Development, 20:3, July 2007, pp. 631-658

A selection of speeches and comments made by President Putin relating to Crimea between December 2013 and December 2014. Accessed through the website of the Russian President

State of art (incl. new sources):

<p>Changes in theory & methodology (why): I've changed from using a constructivist theory and focusing primarily on questions of national identity to a realist-constructivist theory that aims to combine issues of power politics and socially constructed issues such as the prevalence of norms, particularly in this case the issues of the legitimacy of humanitarian-based interventions and their justifications. I found when researching this area and focusing on a constructivist theory that I wasn't wholly convinced by the arguments. Upon finding the realist-constructivist suggestion and reading further into this, I found I could develop a more convincing argument for the action in Ukraine and could combined two approaches, both of which I found significant, but which alone lacked the full interpretative capability that I was looking for.</p>
<p>New theory & methodology (if): Realist-constructivist theory</p>
<p>Proposed structure of dissertation: Introduction Literature Review Theory: An explanation of realism and constructivism and how they, if not combine, then are able to work together to create a more rounded explanation Realist and Constructivist Concepts: Power and National Identity Application of theory: Crimea - geopolitical background/historical background International status - influence/pride Instability in Ukraine - geopolitics/Slavic brotherhood Conclusions</p>
<p>Changes in expected outcomes (why): I expect a more nuanced explanation of the policy towards Ukraine because the combination of realist and constructivist interpretations takes into account traditional power politics of the international sphere, while also working to include an understanding of the particular context and the historical and cultural influences acting upon the agents formulating and implementing the policy.</p>
<p>Cooperation with your supervisor (does it work?): Email correspondence: I feel happier having something concrete to discuss and for him to comment on, so once I've written something and would like some feedback, I pass it on for him to read and comment upon.</p>
<p>Troubles you face: Despite being a relatively recent event, there is so much literature to read which can be overwhelming and also sometimes difficult to analyse from a different angle. Avoiding becoming too immersed in reading and not putting anything down on paper Understanding all the theoretical jargon - there are so many concepts and other theoretical standpoints to digest and understand that it can be confusing, which poses a danger if my written work then becomes confused. In my own analysis, while I understand the realist-constructivist approach, it can be difficult to combine the the approaches in a way that shows they are meant to be viewed together, rather than appearing as two separate theories.</p>