

Kelly Smits

Professor Rosemary Shinko

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Russia and Ukraine have had a long, conflictual history together since the beginning of the twentieth century, and shortly after Ukraine's efforts to form a closer relationship with the European Union, Russia began to engage in retaliatory aggression towards eastern Ukraine. In March of 2014, Russia annexed Crimea, and pro-Russian separatists within Ukraine began seizing parts of the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions on the Russian border (Ukraine Profile). Additionally, Russia amassed an estimated 40,000 troops along the Russian-Ukrainian border (Ukraine Crisis: An Essential Guide to Everything That's Happened so Far). Humanitarian issues and a refugee crisis have erupted as a result of the conflict (Ukraine's Humanitarian Crisis Worsens as Tens of Thousands Flee Combat in East). The question is no longer whether or not a framework for cooperation should be established; the question now is what this framework will look like and how it can be achieved. Orthodox international relations theory can be applied to this conflict and provide a theoretical framework upon which peace can be conceptualized between Ukraine and Russia. While the realist and liberal conceptions of peace in international relations may share some similarities, they are fundamentally different and should both be evaluated deeply before any decisions are made during upcoming peace talks.

A realist peace is a limited peace with a negative epistemology of mankind, meaning that it is based upon the premise that human nature is inherently evil (Richmond 40). Peace is obtainable on both the domestic and international level, but the domestic form is confined by constant preparation for war and the international takes the form of a victor's peace (Richmond 56). In the realist conceptualization of international relations, power and fear drive state interests (Richmond 43). A realist peace in Ukraine would therefore entail Russia annexing all of eastern Ukraine.

Because a large minority of eastern Ukraine is ethnically Russian and an even larger percentage speak Russian instead of Ukrainian, the population therein is driven by an interest of survival (Ukraine Crisis in Maps). In order to survive, the pro-Russian rebels and separatists believe that becoming a part of Russia will increase their power through the alteration of their Westphalian-defined borders. The competition between Russia and Ukraine has upset the balance of power, and redefining the statehood of eastern Ukraine would alleviate this disorder, even if only temporarily.

Moreover, Russia would be the winner in the conflict, deeming it the hegemonic power. Putin would have been able to effectively fulfill his goal of restoring stability in Russia by securing its historical borders (As Tensions Build, U.S. Has “Zero Options” in Ukraine). As a result of the fact that a realist peace results from either hegemony or collapse, Russia would then be the hegemony facilitating the acquisition of a realist peace (Richmond 56). In terms of a victor’s peace, Russia would be the victor dictating the terms of peace for both Russians and Ukrainians. Furthermore, the international peace would be limited because Ukraine would be subservient to Russia’s self-interest. This again relies upon the assumption of a negative epistemology of human beings and that states operate in relation to the behavior of individuals (Richmond 44). Russia seeks to secure itself and its interests and uses its power to eliminate the threats created by Ukraine. Since—from a realist perspective—the conceptualization of peace is not universally applicable, Russia would end up in a better state of peace than Ukraine because it would acquire the territory it sought to conquer (Richmond 45).

This would constitute a realist peace because it is defined not by the absence of threat but the absence of violence (Richmond 41). In other words, the peace would be unstable and an eruption of new violence could easily occur, enforcing the realist conception that peace is a “continuing cycle of violence and coercively induced stability” (Richmond 40). Ukraine would be driven by an interest to gain back the territory that had been annexed by Russia, and Russia would be driven by an interest to keep and maintain that same territory. Since there would be a power

disparity between Russia and Ukraine, Russia's hegemony would prevent peace from being established. There would be the constant threat of the two nations erupting into conflict, so any peace would be restricted by the "tragic repetition" of violence between Russia and Ukraine (Richmond 56). Peace would be possible domestically during all of the threatening because the pro-Russian separatists would have joined Russia and left Ukraine, which means that the populations of both Ukraine and Russia would be ethnically and linguistically aligned within their sovereignties. However, this domestic peace would be precluded by the constant preparation for violence between Ukraine and Russia.

A liberal peace, in comparison to the realist conceptualization of peace, is more positive and normative (Richmond 21). While a realist peace relies upon a negative perception of human nature, a liberal peace relies upon an assumption of harmony and cooperation in domestic and international relations (Richmond 23). Liberals believe that peace is self-governing on both the domestic and international level and that international organization develops peace as a common good (Richmond 38). Perhaps the most important characteristic of a liberal peace lies in the fact that it can be established or created (Richmond 36). Moreover, a liberal peace in Ukraine would be both possible and pragmatic. It would entail Russia withdrawing forces from Ukraine, allowing Ukraine to retain its Westphalian sovereignty. This presupposes the idea that Russia, Ukraine, and their respective leaders are rational and prone to cooperation.

What would initiate the alleviation of Russian aggression would be an international organization such as the United Nations in addition to the collective disdain expressed by nations from all over the world. The UN would provide the top-down governance required to define the limits of good state behavior. Moreover, liberals have confidence in the ability of international institutions to guide state's actions and to prevent war (Richmond 34). In addition to relying on international institutions, a liberal peace also relies upon the creation of a human rights discourse (Richmond 29). Russia, Ukraine, and the United Nations would have to create a sensible solution to

restore stability for Ukrainian civilians and their infrastructures. Doing so would enable the construction of a peace based upon a legal framework in which the nations involved in the conflict would be held legally accountable for their violence; Russia and Ukraine would hold responsibilities to their citizens as individuals (Richmond 29).

European countries would have a vested interest in maintaining the peace between Russia and Ukraine because the conflict occurs right in Europe's backyard (Humanitarian Crisis Growing in Ukraine amid Civilian Mass Exodus). Moreover, the international community and its communal governance would further facilitate the creation of an extensive framework for peace between the two nations. Because European countries are interdependent with both Ukraine and Russia, they would seek to establish a lasting peace in the region in order to bring both western and eastern Europe into the "world society." This relates to the liberal idea that peace should be conceptualized in broader terms, taking on a form of universality (Richmond 36). If Russia withdrew from Ukraine with the support of international institutions and other nations, a global commons would grow in which peace would be seen as the ultimate goal. In other words, Russia's withdrawal would initiate the process of peace through which the outcome of peace could be attained.

All in all, a realist peace in Ukraine would involve Russia annexing eastern Ukraine. It would be negative, limited, temporary, and unstable, with the threat of violence always looming. It would exemplify the inherent contradiction in the realist conceptualization of peace that domestic peace could withstand the pressures of the incessant conflict internationally created by Russia's hegemonic superiority. A liberal peace in Ukraine would be one in which Russia relinquishes its hold on eastern Ukraine. While it would be more difficult to obtain than a realist peace, it would last significantly longer. So even though a liberal peace is more normative and unrealistic, once it is established it would be easier to sustain than a realist peace.