

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

Based on the research question of this thesis, **“Why Do Georgia and Ukraine Misperceived Russia’s Aspiration as a Great Power?”** The author has come up with an answer. **The thick Hobbesian culture of Russian Near-Abroad filtered benign Russian intention as a threat rather than a cooperative endeavor for its neighbors.** This thesis uses Wendtian Constructivism to come up with this answer. First, the author identified the pre-social identity and interest of state actors and their social interaction from the Dissolution of the Soviet Union until the advent of the war. Second, the thesis pinpoints the identities and interest that guides state behavior in the region. Third, the failure of benign Russian aspiration is connected to the Hobbesian culture of anarchy that dominated the region. By highlighting the mutually constitutive and co-determined nature of social interaction and the culture of anarchy, the author answered the research question and found several significant findings that support this answer.

First, the nature of social interaction between Russia-Georgia and Russia-Ukraine affirms the Hobbesian culture of anarchy in the region. Both actors engage in questioning each other intentions. Russia laments Georgia and Ukraine that move further away from their traditional friendship. While Georgia and Ukraine are suspicious of Russia and made several policies, both domestic and foreign, that shows this suspicion.

Second, the color revolutions are the benchmark that starts the trend of enmity, ensuring Hobbesian culture is dominant when the war breaks out. This

thesis finds that the Hobbesian culture is the dominant culture when war breaks out, but the period before the color revolution is arguable. Pre-Revolution Georgia-Ukraine relations with Russia can be argued to be a Lockean culture than a Hobbesian culture.

Third, Russian identity as a benign hegemon failed to reproduce itself due to not meeting its interest of friendly client states. First, as a benign hegemon, Russia needs to have military, political, economic, and social capabilities befitting of a hegemon. Second, to have an area of specific interest where its interest has precedence. Lastly, third, have friendly neighbors that affirm Russian hegemony. Russia fulfills its initial interest but failed to fulfill the second and third interests. This failure pushed Russia to abandon its more cooperative tactic into a reciprocal confrontative tactic.

Fourth, Georgia and Ukraine's perception of the region became the adopted one due to Russia giving up its benign intention and start treating Georgia and Ukraine as an enemy. Contrary to Russian aspiration as a great power, Georgia and Ukraine's identity as captive European states under threat of Russian colonialism survived and became the theme of their relationship. After Russia abandon its more cooperative tactics, its new confrontative stance serves as a fuel that further legitimizes Georgian and Ukrainian definition of the conflict.

Fifth, war breaks out because the Hobbesian culture is the macrostructure of states relation. Hobbesian culture helped shape the course of action when states have a conflict. In 2008 and 2014, Russia-Georgia and Russia-Ukraine relations are dominated by this culture. Accordingly, when conflict breaks out, each state opts

for military action rather than other alternatives because the context of their relationship makes it more logical to do so.

There is no winner to the war in 2008, and in 2014, Russia, Georgia, and Ukraine only suffer losses. Some argue that 2008 marked Russia's resurgence as a Great Power. Nevertheless, this author disagrees. The cost to Russia's image and its foreign relationships are too high for the benefits of being acknowledged as a Great Power, albeit one that does consider using force possible if its interest is disturbed. Russia could still be acknowledged as a benign Great Power, and its long-term goal of Greater Europe integration can be feasible. The war, in contrast, brought years of effort to have a peaceful relationship in tatters. Saakashvili, Georgia, does share the blame for the conflict. However, if Russia did not mount a counter-offensive or acknowledge South Ossetia and Abkhazia independence, It could be the decisive prove for Georgian political elites to know that Russia does not have colonial intention. The same can be said with Ukraine, Russia's action in securing Crimea and supporting Eastern Ukraine separatists are too costly toward any effort of reconciliation with Ukraine.

Its implication to the West is also mostly negatives. Russia gained two antagonistic friend-turned-enemy at its borders and two wars that can be used to justify its imperial intention. Its image as a law-abiding state is crushed as it proves to be incapable of self-restraint in critical events, Germany and France, which shows sympathy for Russia's Greater Europe vision are delegitimized by the Atlanticist tendencies that Russia feared the most. It's relationship with the West

are severely damaged, forcing it to be more dependent on China. All in all, Russia lost the most as a Great Power.

There are several weaknesses in this research. First, due to the author's inability to read in Ukrainian, Russian, and Georgian, many crucial documents and statements from officials that are not available in English to be excluded from this research. Second, this thesis exclusively uses Wendtian Constructivism, thus proving it ideal in a light constructivism framework but not satisfactory for pure reflectivist research. Third, the long time period forces the author to cut some details, especially when describing social interactions between the states.

Based on these weaknesses, the author suggests several topics for further research. Traditionally the West has always been the Significant Other for Russia. By simplifying the West, this research is more critical toward the regional dynamics but are blunted when examining the West's role. A research direction that places more weight on the West without mitigating Ukraine and Georgia's role will be beneficial to complement this research. Second, the ambitious intention to correlates the 2008 Russo-Georgian war and the 2014 Ukrainian crises limit in-depth analysis of the idiosyncratic factors of Mikhail Saakashvili, Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian elites in the advent of the war. Research that breaks down internal state dynamics will give more depth toward the formulation of interest and identity that guides behavior. The main methods used in studying Russian near-Abroad are Realism and Constructivism. Using other methodologies like critical theory and Post-Modernism can give a substantive input toward understanding the region.

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