



Chapter 8

Russia's Militaristic Rhetoric, Imperialism, and Expansion: Wars in Georgia and Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

Throughout history, Russia's narrative of being a "sieged fortress" persists despite contemporary absence of external threats. This narrative justifies expansion as a cultural necessity, compensating for perceived existential threats and unsatisfactory living conditions. While historically rooted, this narrative serves as a psychological justification for expansionist policies. Throughout history, Muscovy has established dominance, notably in subjugating elites. This historical trend of overpowering local authorities reflects in Russia's modern aggressive foreign policy. The purpose of the study is to determine the socio-cultural and psycho-social foundations of its modern aggressive expansionist foreign policy based on the analysis of Russian history. Revealing the foreign and domestic reasons for its aggression against Georgia and Ukraine. Showing the importance of local actors in global politics on the example of the international significance of Russia's war against Georgia and Ukraine.

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the Topic (The Black Swan and the Gray Rhino)

As a result of Russia's full-scale open aggression against Ukraine, the relevance of the analysis of the internal political foundations and historical roots of Russia's foreign policy suddenly increased sharply. At first glance, the war in Ukraine appears to civilized society as a "Black Swan," (Source: Encyclo-

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pedia Britannica), (what is meant behind this term generally is known, but still, its semantics should be emphasized in this specific case. It's meant here that a full-scale operation and overt aggression in Europe, even coming from Russia, was an absolutely unimaginable and thus unpredictable event) in fact, it appears to be a "Grey Rhino" (Wucker, 2016) (In this particular case, both from the point of view of post-Soviet Russia as a whole, and from the other side, the current moment, the danger was inevitable).

The fact is that, not seeing the "Gray Rhino" is a phenomenon characteristic of human psychology, especially for developed, civilized societies. There are events that are so foreign and unacceptable, so threatening, that accepting them psychologically requires getting out of the comfort zone, psychological self-compulsion to move from a familiar, safe, comfortable situation to an unfamiliar, dangerous zone.

It can be said that, in one way or another Russian aggression was absolutely predictable, both at the current moment as well as throughout the entire previous period, starting with the proxy wars against Georgia and Ukraine and ending with open aggression against Georgia in August 2008.

Although aggression and expansion have been a characteristic tool of all humanity throughout its history, Russia, unlike modern civilized humanity, is characterized by anachronism (based on historical experience, legitimation of the use of a tool currently rejected by modern developed humanity) and a deeper historical socio-cultural characteristic that has distinguished it from Western civilization throughout its existence.

The purpose of the study is to determine the socio-cultural and psycho-social foundations of Russia's modern aggressive expansionist foreign policy based on the analysis of its history. Revealing the foreign and domestic reasons for its aggression against Georgia and Ukraine. Showing the importance of local actors in global politics on the example of the international significance of Russia's war against Georgia and Ukraine.

RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Based on the object of research (aggression and expansion in Russian foreign policy) and the subject of research (historical, cultural and psycho-social reasons for the specified object and the goals of the regime), taking into account the purpose of the research (to determine the socio-cultural and psycho-social foundations of Russia's modern aggressive expansionist foreign policy based on the analysis of history), the selection of the methodological bases of the research is on the one hand quite difficult, since it covers a rather wide area, on the other hand, it is rather scarce, as it involves phenomena that are difficult to grasp from the point of view of formalization, such as, for example: social psychology, declared and hidden interests of the regime, real and imaginary foundations of expansionist policy.

The selection of research methods is also complicated by the fact that it refers to currently ongoing processes, the causes, progress, and assessment of probable results depend to a significant extent on the position of the observer.

Thus, mainly historical analogy, parallel analysis, comparative analysis and content analysis methods were applied as research methods.

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