

The Ukraine War and After: An American Critical Realist Perspective

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Abstract

This talk will apply some principles of critical realism to the Ukraine war from an American perspective. Thus, the first part of the paper will briefly review Critical Realism (CR) as a philosophical perspective. Although it will mention the CR approach to causality, it will address more the CR approach to truth. This first part of the paper will arrive at what we may think of as political epistemology, how we employ judgmental rationality with epistemic humility to arrive at what is true about macropolitical reality in general and the Ukraine war in particular.

In America, there actually is some debate about the causes of war, reflecting what CR calls epistemic relativism. While the dominant view in America and the view of the speaker is that the war is due to Russian aggression, a counter-narrative from the American left blames the war on NATO overreach. Between the dominant and counter narratives, we find not just different causes of war but correspondingly different policy proposals for what comes afterward.

The second, longer portion of the paper will illustrate CR principles in application to the war. The speaker will share how as an American in a stance of epistemic humility, he employs judgmental rationality to compare the relative merits of the two opposing Ukraine narratives and thus discern the truth about the war and what should be done about it.