

Review of the Master Thesis 'Different Mentality as a Basis of International Conflicts. The Case of Escalation Relations between Russia and the EU in 2008–2018 by Ekaterina Kruglikova

The thesis of Ekaterina Kruglikova addresses the issue of gradual deterioration of relations between Russia and the European Union since 2008 and interprets them in terms of cultural conflict; e.g. conflicting beliefs and values. The crucial topics of the thesis are mentality, belief system, codes, social identity, self-identity, collective unconscious, cultural approach and conflict resolutions.

The candidate also formulated her main research questions and areas: (1)the concept of group and individual mentality, (2)cultural variations as a cause of escalation relationships, (3)pedagogical effect of intercultural dialogue and cultural variation in conflict resolution. The thesis encompasses the theoretical part (introduction of key terminology and candidate's reflections) and the empirical one; semi–structured depth interviews, an analysis of the World Value Survey and comparative questionnaire-based survey.

The bulk of the thesis is structured in the three parts and later subchapters; (1)group and individual mentality in sociological and psychological contexts, (2) Difference in Russian and European System of Values and (3)Intercultural Dialogue as a Method of Reflection of Cultural Content and Identity.

The valuable component of the thesis is also Annexes: Annex 1 (results of data collection – interviewing Czech citizens), Annex 2 (results of data collection – interviewing Russian citizens).

The positive aspects of the thesis:

(1)Harmonious relationship between and clear structuring of the theoretical and the empirical part of the paper as well as the concluding chapter about the importance of intercultural dialogue:(1) main terms and definition, formation of individual beliefs mentality and self-identity, etc. (2) comparative questionnaire-based survey analysis, (3) depth interview analysis, etc., (3) pedagogical effect of intercultural dialogue and self-awareness about cultural content.

(2)Originality of the sources; presentation of theoretical approaches and some original reflections are not based on literature, usually prescribed in Western European or American universities but also include Russian theoretical approaches in social sciences, recent results of Russian empirical research including candidate's recent electronic and printed publications; e.g. Draw the Curtain on Russian Freedom, Intercultural Dialogue as a Dialogue of Values, and so one.

(3)The employment of the three methodological approaches is the convincing component of the thesis. Compared to reliance of major final works on the single method, the candidate chose three distinct methodological approaches to test or verify her theoretical reflections; e.g. semi-structured depth interviews, an analysis of the World Value Survey and comparative questionnaire-based survey.

The negative aspects of the thesis:

(1)The introduction of diverse psychological and sociological approaches has been negatively influenced by simple description or brief explanation of their most important elements (their criticism or eventually their critical appropriation is missing). The employment of several methodological approaches on tens of pages of the thesis resulted in superficial (instead of deep) thinking and too general presentation of the information.

(2)Despite elaborated style of some passages and original points about Russian cultural environments and collective memory building, the final text is marked by 'narrative' and a lack of critical analysis; it can be characterized as science popularization. Furthermore, connections among theoretical approaches and specific passages very often lack logical links or logical advancement and connection among them is loose (instead of 'compact.').

(3)The formal aspects of the thesis are satisfactory but they are not perfect; there are left some grammar mistakes; 'a person grows up in a native country or, in other words, within one culture and gain specific cultural background during nurture (gain instead of gains). Furthermore, the references at the end of the text don't correspond to required criteria; for example titles of books and articles in Russian should be translated in English.

Thesis Defence Questions:

- 1) Explain what sociological and psychological definitions of culture you are familiar with and what is understanding of culture in your final work.
- 2) Is your work purely sociological or rather interdisciplinary, e.g. does it contain sociological and psychological approaches?
- 3) For your analysis you chose the three specific methods. What other ones could be used for the data collection concerning the topic of your thesis?

Given the shortcomings of the thesis I propose the grade between *very good* and *good* and the final grade should result from defence.

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