

Name of the student:	Norayr Mirakyan
Title of the thesis:	EU Cultural Relations with Partner Countries: Case Study of Armenia
Reviewer:	Eliška Tomalová-ů

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

In his thesis, Norayr deals with EU cultural relations with Armenia from 2014 to 2020. He opted for a very complex topic giving the fact, that it is almost impossible to define the boundaries of cultural cooperation. His research focuses on a single case of Armenia, without seeking generalization of the main findings. In this context, the thesis contributes mainly to the understanding of the EU-Armenia relations. It seeks to answer the following research question: “What are the sources and trajectory of development of cultural relations between the EU and Armenia from 2014-2020?” (p. 11). The literature review analyses very thoroughly the IR theories and their views on cultural relations and cultural diplomacy focusing mainly on the critique of liberalism.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The thesis represents a single case study of EU-Armenia cultural relations. From the theoretical point of view, the research builds on a large array of sources combining socialization theories (Tulmets) with soft power and cultural relations/diplomacy conceptual framework (Nye, Cull, and others). The author uses both primary and secondary sources – borrowing secondary data from Isar (2015) – the use and validity of this source should be better explained (p. 32).

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

The conclusions offer a typology of challenges that the EU-Armenia cultural relations have been facing – sensitivity of the political role (1) and the professional capacity development (2). Both challenges and their analysis helps the reader to understand better the reality of the case. However, it does not offer a clear link to the theoretical part of the thesis. It does also contain normative aspects and recommendations that should not be part of the conclusions.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

The thesis would deserve a proof reading as it contains numerous grammar mistakes. The style is sometimes confusing, which makes the reader uncomfortable with a sentiment of not being able to follow author’s arguments.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

The author had big ambitions during his research and the theoretical part of the thesis does prove it. It opens very relevant ontological questions that situate the study of cultural relations in IR theoretical debates. In my opinion, there is a missing link between the theoretical and empirical part that would make the findings more valuable and would offer a broader perspective (the author openly asserts he has no will to generalize his findings outside of the scope of the case, but given the nature of EU’s cultural relations, the broader picture should not be excluded).

I do also admit having had problems to follow Norayr's thought, the style is quite complicated (see the previous section).
 The theoretical and conceptual part is very detailed but I do miss some key definitions related to the topic, such as culture and identity.
 On the positive side, I do appreciate the complex view on cultural relations/cooperation and diplomacy.

Grade (A-F):	C
Date:	Signature:
9/9/2021	

classification scheme

Percentile	Prague		Krakow		Leiden		Barcelona	
	91-100 %	8,5%	5	6,7%	8,5-10	5,3%	9-10	5,5 %
A (91-100)	91-100 %	8,5%	5	6,7%	8,5-10	5,3%	9-10	5,5 %
B (81-90)	81-90 %	16,3%	4,5	11,7%	7,5-8,4	16,4%	8-8,9	11,0 %
C (71-80)	71-80 %	16,3%	4	20%	6,5-7,4	36,2%	7-7,9	18,4 %
D (61-70)	61-70 %	24%	3,5	28,3%			6-6,9	35,2 %
E (51-60)	51-60 %	34,9%	3	33,4 %	6-6,4	42,1 %	5-5,9	30,1 %

Assessment criteria:

- Excellent (A): 'Outstanding performance with only minor errors';
- Very good (B): 'Above the average standard but with some errors';
- Good (C): 'Generally sound work but with a number of notable errors';
- Satisfactory (D): 'Fair but with significant shortcomings';
- Sufficient (E): 'Performance meets the minimum criteria';
- Fail: 'Some/considerable more work required before the credit can be awarded'.