

Evaluation of master thesis written by **Oumaima Azzaoui** titled **Identity and Euroscepticism at odds with EU institutions and Grand Strategy**

The student has been working for a long time and systematically on the thesis. Step by step the topic of the research and the research questions have been narrowing down (originally the ambition was to touch a European Union-Chinese relations).

The student has gone through a big amount of academic literature during the research process. The student has also produced multiple drafts of the master thesis (the final version is a result of painful shortening process). Generally, I consider the student as a very dedicated to the topic of European Union, hard working, serious in her efforts, open to discussion and reflexive (in terms of feedback).

I would also like to highlight that as a thesis is written in the field of historical sociology, it put an emphasis of historical background and processes relevant for the particular topics.

However, I see two main shortcomings:

1. Still, the **topic of the thesis and the resulting research questions is rather broad** (although the four main groups of research questions relate to each other well, meaning it makes sense to ask like this). It sounds more like a team project, rather than an individual master thesis (To be fair, the master thesis reflects on this in the concluding chapter).

To be more clear, the first group of research questions deals with identity. Asking what is (European) identity? Is European identity and national identity rivalling of each other? Or are they mutually inclusive? What is Euroscepticism? What has led to Euroscepticism?

Second group of questions relates to the so called Grand Strategy. As such, the research questions revolve around understanding what is Grand Strategy? Does the European Union have a Grand Strategy? If at all, how is Euroscepticism manifested into Grand Strategy?

The last group of research questions focuses on European institutions. Are these institutions reactive to the scepticism phenomenon? Are institutions at the forefront of an EU Grand Strategy formulation? Do their policies emit a European identity? How do these institutions navigate identity and Europeanization? (pages 5 and 6).

To sum up, the **very ambitious aim of the thesis is to develop a deeper understanding of EU institutions under a Grand Strategy, Euroscepticism, and in light of identity** (page 8). The wide scope of the thesis is again evident in the concluding chapter (pages 86-91). The added value could really be the fact, that is touches more topics and tries to figure out the many connections/relation among them. However, this promise has not been fully fulfilled.

2. Unclear identity of the thesis in terms of **methodology**. The thesis claims to be theoretical and at the same time based on qualitative methodology in general, and on qualitative content analyses (or textual analysis) in particular. It follows informing the reader that European Commission communications along with leading literature in each academic field is treated as primary source (page 8). However, it does not elaborate on

how it has selected the relevant texts that have entered into an analysis. Also, it does not inform about some possible system of creating categories and a process of coding of those relevant texts.

Questions for the defence:

1. What does the student consider to be the most valuable insight into the topic of European Union? I am asking since the concluding chapter seems to be rather complex.
2. Could the student reflect on her motivation to pick up such a topic? Is there any country of origin based interest? I am asking if it is possible to reflect on how being from Maghreb (Morocco) entered into the decision making about the topic as well as the way it was approached?

I propose mark **three**.

At Kokorinsko, September 12, 2022.

Karel Cerny