

Jagiellonian University in Kraków
Institute of European Studies

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The diploma examination is scheduled on 21.07.2022.
Head of the educational unit

DIPLOMA THESIS ASSESSMENT

Author: **Anastasiia Pinchuk**
 Student identification number or code: **1180168**
 Thesis title: **Punching Above the Weight: the Baltic States' Energy Security Policy**
 Thesis title in Polish: **Punching Above the Weight: the Baltic States' Energy Security Policy**
 Thesis advisor: **dr Grzegorz Pożarlik**
 Faculty/institute: **Institute of European Studies, Faculty of International and Political Studies, Jagiellonian University in Kraków**
 Programme of study: **(WSMP-E317D-2SO) European Politics and Society (Praga)**
 Diploma seminar:
 Key words: **energy security, energy security policy, energy policy, the Baltic states, small states, energy policy making**
 Grade: **3,5 (Satisfactory Plus)**
 Weighted average for closed questions: **3,47**
 Sum of points from closed questions: **55,5**

THESIS STRUCTURE:

- 1. How well was the research problem defined?**
[Value 3 with weight 1] Satisfactory
- 2. How well does the content of the thesis fit the research question?**
[Value 4 with weight 1] Good
- 3. Assessment of thesis structure (organisation of content, order of chapters, completeness of content).**
[Value 3 with weight 1] Satisfactory
- 4. Assessment of the student's awareness of the theoretical context of the topic**
[Value 3 with weight 1] Satisfactory
- 5. Assessment of the cohesion and clarity of the conceptualisation of the thesis**
[Value 3 with weight 1] Satisfactory
- 6. Assessment of the empirical context**
[Value 3,5 with weight 1] Satisfactory Plus
- 7. Assessment of the analytical dimension of the thesis**
[Value 3 with weight 1] Satisfactory
- 8. Assessment of the critical dimension of the thesis**
[Value 3 with weight 1] Satisfactory
- 9. To what extent are the hypotheses formulated in the thesis original?**
[Value 3,5 with weight 1] Satisfactory Plus

SOURCES AND THEIR USAGE:

- 10. How rich and varied were the sources/data used?**
[Value 4,5 with weight 1] Good Plus
- 11. How appropriate was the use of sources/data in the text?**
[Value 4 with weight 1] Good

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE THESIS:

12. Assessment of the readability of the thesis

[Value 3 with weight 1] Satisfactory

13. To what extent did the text use proper punctuation?

[Value 4 with weight 1] Good

14. To what extent did the text use proper grammar and spelling?

[Value 4 with weight 1] Good

15. Assessment of the completeness of the bibliography

[Value 3,5 with weight 1] Satisfactory Plus

16. Assessment of the student's ability to cite sources

[Value 3,5 with weight 1] Satisfactory Plus

COMMENTS:

17. Comments (minimum 900 characters)

The student asks how the Baltic states have enhanced their energy security. A case for this is made on the basis that the Baltics as a whole have been the subject of relatively few studies on energy politics. A further premise is that the Baltics are small states and therefore that the thesis has capacity to contribute to that literature. While this was not systematically talked through, the current war emerges as a context demanding such an examination. As a result, it is not clear what is really to be gained by this study in relation to these two and the heavy reliance on secondary sources throughout the thesis suggests more was known about the Baltics as a whole in relation to energy than the student suggests. More therefore needed to be done to make this persuasive. The war provided that context, which again created an imperative for talking through why the Baltic states deserve further study and how the thesis would help illuminate just how much larger, more powerful states have captured the EU energy agenda despite very clear reasons - as experienced most heavily by the states more proximate to Russia - for there to have been a heavy reduction in the EU's dependence on Russia. I give the student the benefit of the doubt here but really it is important that the reader not be left to do with as much heavy lifting as we are.

There was scope for the student to deliver much more substantial original work and that is in relation to regionalism. It would have been useful for the student to use work on this, particularly work done on sub-regional arrangements where we very much see the small states literature come into its own. There is much good work to be drawn on here and scope for generalisability to be considered. See work on Benelux, Visegrad, the Nordic Council etc. The analysis of the Baltic Assembly - as well as in chapter 3 - would have benefited hugely from an encounter with this literature and allowed the student to make very credible claims for adding to this literature. Some of the real potential of this thesis was therefore missed, I think, because of a failure to think more about the underpinnings of the analysis.

For this reason and others, I am not terribly convinced by the discussion of Neo-Functionalism (N-F) or a liberal intergovernmentalist (LI) theory or the latter's application, to the point that it might have been better to have eliminated it and relied on the insights of the small state literature to point us to considerations, e.g. alliance-building, negotiating skills, agenda-setting etc. Equally, the Europeanisation literature could have been used to much greater effect and satisfied the theoretical considerations. Given what we know of how small states can exert power despite their supposed weakness, cross-loading looks like an important element of Europeanisation that is omitted. The uploading is also important, of course but so is the cross-loading, as the student's own analysis sometimes suggests.

Ultimately I am not convinced the student delivers the process-tracing that is claimed. That method should have resulted in thick description of the various mechanisms used by the Baltics and, as the student recognises, a causal relationship needed to be established and this is not achieved either. The student therefore needed to think far more about how to demonstrate that process and then to negate the role of possible intervening variables. It is not clear to me whether there is a relationship between the Baltic Assembly and any uploading to the EU - that should have been discovered in a tracing of process. The talk of advocacy was not enough - what fora were used? Were meetings of the Assembly ever expanded to bring in other like-minded states? When did meetings of the Assembly take place relative to EU summits or energy ministers' meetings? We do get some sense of some cross-loading efforts but these are not talked about in this fashion nor systematically explored in the way process tracing demands.

Speaking of method, I regret to say that the discussion of this does not set out a clear analytical framework, it is not enough to say what will be done, it needs to be talked through so that the reader can understand the various stages. I understand the codes were to be derived inductively but that does not mean they could not be talked through in the Methods chapter since the reader is reading the final thesis, not drafts of it. I am not at all sure why a content analysis would have been selected versus a discourse analysis given the student wants to "clarify the context and the conditions of document creation" (which would not seem to be necessary given the very extensive work available on this).

I have serious doubts about the ending discussion, which seems almost entirely speculative. There is a body of literature that deals with forecasting but this requires discursive engagement before it can be utilised to draw any useful conclusion - this is not the case with this thesis.

There are some factual errors that may reflect a failure to clarify precisely what was being talked about but may also signify a gap in the student's knowledge. For instance, on p. 3 it seems that the student is suggesting that the matter of energy security "appeared on the European agenda for the first time in 2006" - this is not the case, of course. At other points, more facts were required, e.g. p. 19 where it would have been useful to know what the Baltic states' relative dependence on oil and gas actually was.

The thesis suffers from sizeable over-use of verbatim quoting. This has two effects. The first is that the student's voice is never really established. Perhaps more seriously, it is difficult to credit the student with understanding when they do not talk through complex arguments in their own words.

I do not understand a structure where we have 5 sections and 18 pages before we get to chapter one. Nor do I understand why a discussion comes after the final conclusions. There are further structural problems in that there is enormous repetition - e.g. about small states and weakness and power or about energy policy in the EU. The discussion also moves around in a manner that is neither well-signified nor according to a clear logic. For instance, we are told on p. 11 that the thesis will employ an LI frame but we then launch into a longer discussion of N-F than the one that follows on LI. There are many other places where the structure seems haphazard and makes for a difficult read, another example being that on p. 32, well into the analysis, we are referred to methodological considerations again, a full 15 pages after the Methods chapter ended.

Overall, the thesis is passable but reads more like a draft than a final polished version. I have full sympathy with the circumstances under which the thesis was written in the final months and have given some benefit of the doubt and tried to see sub-text. Nevertheless, for the defence, I think the student needs to reflect on three things: i) Theory - would the same scope and claims feature in a revised version of the thesis? If not, what would change and why; ii) Reflect on method - was process-tracing really carried out or could an analytical framework from the small states or Europeanisation literature been employed instead?; iii) What line can we draw between scenario-building, forecasting and speculation? Are any or all of these appropriate to a thesis and if so, what would need to happen to make the discussion convincing?

..... Kraków, on 13.07.2022

(Place and date)

(Reviewer's signature electronically approved)
Maxine David