

Name of the student:	Arpi MURADYAN
Title of the thesis:	Diaspora as a Public Diplomacy Agent: A Comparative Case Study of Armenian Communities in Italy and Poland
Reviewer:	Yannis KARAGIANNIS (IBEI)

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

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

The relevance of the topic is clearly explained, and the literature review is rather informative. However, there are a few points on which a new version of the thesis could bring significant improvements:

- 1) As the thesis currently stands, there is no clear research question, in the sense that the author does not document some clear variation (i.e. what is often referred to as an “empirical puzzle”) that he would then set out to explain. In other words, expressed in the language of methodology, there is no clearly identified dependent variable. I would encourage the author to identify such a dependent variable, and to then develop a theory and some causal hypotheses, which s/he could test by contrasting them to some specific empirical cases.
- 2) Although the literature review is informative (in the sense that it usefully presents the ways different key terms are used by different authors), it is not geared towards the derivations and/or the justification of some causal hypotheses.
- 3) Due to point 1 above, the main research question and the sub-question are pitched at a purely descriptive, and at a strikingly case-specific level. I would encourage the author to develop a more causal research question, and to do so without reference to any specific cases. Research questions must be expressed at a more general level.
- 4) Last but not least, the author correctly points out that there have not been any significant academic studies of diaspora groups’ social media public diplomacy activities; but he does not clearly explain why we need such studies: What will the theory and/or the practice of IR gain by knowing what different diasporic groups do, or why they do it? Which exact part of our IR models would be able to update and upgrade if only we had such knowledge? What sort of existing theoretical arguments would suddenly seem wrong, or at least incomplete, given that new knowledge produced on diasporas’ public diplomacy activities?

2. ANALYSIS

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

The methodology (including the theoretical derivation of empirical observations the research design, the case selection, and the specific coding technique) is the weakest part of the thesis. There are important problems with the case selection, ranging from the limitation to Armenian groups to the exclusive focus on groups that are actually active in social media (on page 39 one reads: “*What refers to the selection of the organizations, it is based on the availability of presence on social media, namely Facebook platform.*” This truncates the dependent variable and hence introduces a severe selection bias.).

A less important, but still rather troubling, issue is the author’s repeated assertion that he/she innovates in his/her “use of social media as a source of data”.

Finally, the author does not discuss why was the data collection was manual rather than machine-assisted. There are numerous software packages than can perform qualitative content analyses of big data.

3. CONCLUSIONS

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

The research seems to be about the effectiveness of diaspora groups' public diplomacy efforts in social media. If so, then the most appropriate research design would be one built around two comparisons: (a) public opinion in the host country before and after group A's social network campaign; and (b) public opinion in two very similar countries where a diaspora group has conducted different social network campaigns. The rest (e.g. the history of Armenian diaspora, the repeated claim that States do not have any longer the monopoly of diplomacy, etc) is interesting, but it adds little to the persuasiveness of the argument.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

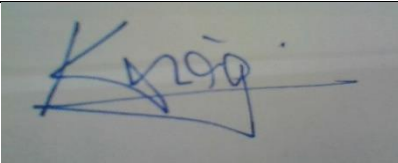
(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

The language is entirely appropriate and respectful as far as the tone is concerned. The adherence to academic standards is clear throughout the thesis, though there are a few very minor things to correct in view of a future version (e.g. the paragraph about the author's personal experiences is not necessary; section titles such as "theoretical chapter" are not common in academic literature, etc.). There are, however, too many grammatical and orthographic errors, as well as some incomplete references (e.g. Cull & Sadlier 2009, Georgiou 2013, or Wendt 2003). More worryingly, there is a log quote in pages 15-16 that resembles very much the quote in page 25 ... and yet the two quotes are attributed to different authors. The layout is very good.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

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

The dissertation has several strengths, some of which I did not mention above. First and foremost, it represents an important effort in terms of collecting, organizing, and classifying data. Second, there is a sustained attempt to establish a conversation with some theoretical concepts. Third, this is a truly interesting text to read. On the other hand, the dissertation does not test any theoretically derived hypotheses; does not rely on a solid and clear research design; and cannot really prove whether diaspora groups' online campaigns have any impact or not.

Grade (A-F):	C
Date:	Signature:
26/09/2022	

classification scheme

Percentile	Prague		Krakow		Leiden		Barcelona	
	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'.