

MASTER'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Economic spill-over of Europeanization: A permissible attack on realism?
Student's name:	Sebastian Kiehl
Referee's name:	Jan Hornát

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	50	21
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	15	10
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	15	10
<i>Total</i>		80	41
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	10	8
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	5	2
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	5	4
<i>Total</i>		20	14
TOTAL		100	55

Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score: 4 %

[NB:] If the plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score is above 15%, the reviewer has to include his/her assessment of the originality of the reviewed thesis in his/her review.

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria (min. 1800 characters including spaces when recommending a passing grade, min. 2500 characters including spaces when recommending a failing grade):

The submitted thesis has many issues, making it borderline acceptable for defence. First and foremost – as the author himself acknowledges – there was a lack of consultation and communication between me and the author. Part of this can be considered as my fault for not being adamant and imposing enough to push Sebastian to send drafts or at least have me check over the final version before the submission. However, even in the one draft of the first part of the paper, that I had the chance to comment, Sebastian did not implement most of my suggestions. This is linked to the fact that the paper was written in haste and its presentation is a testament to that – the text holds a grave number of typos and grammatical shortcomings, which could have been taken care of just with a simple spell-check or a final editing and read-through.

Apart from the paper's presentation, the paper holds some theoretical and logical fallacies that need to be addressed. In essence, Sebastian is trying to make the case that the prime motivation of states entering the EU is their expectation that they will significantly benefit from membership *economically*. This, in turn, and according to the author's reading, contradicts the theoretical assumptions of realist thought, which understand states as unilateral actors protective of their sovereignty.

The problem I see here is that Sebastian maintains a very specific reading of realism. On the one hand, he highlights states' inclination for unilateral behavior, but also notes that they are "largely motivated by self-interest" (p. 9) and that according to realists "international cooperation is only meaningful when it benefits states" (p. 12). However, aren't economic benefits derived from EU membership clear self-interests? In this sense, self-interest trumps the ideological protectionism of a state's sovereignty, and we could thus make an opposite claim to Sebastian's thesis – the expectation of economic spillover upon EU accession clearly confirms realist dogmas. So, this exercise only shows that such meta-theories are not fully adequate to treat and explain the given question (although this is the problem of the theories themselves and not that of the author). Still, a more nuanced and sensitive reading of realism and its ensuing mid-range theories could have served Sebastian better.

I do not see much reason to discuss liberalism, constructivism and Marxism in the paper and I believe these parts are redundant and their space comes at the expense of the more substantial parts of the thesis. (Calling the theories "political ideologies" (p. 9) is also a misnomer.)

The third chapter rightly shows that EU membership is contingent upon the domestic population's expectation of the benefits it will receive upon ceding a part of its sovereignty. Yet, the chapter also demonstrates the author's conundrum regarding the factors/variables that motivate states to become EU members. Sebastian demonstrates that while some populations are keen on the economic spillovers/benefits, others are looking to gain more security/stability and a solidification of their democratic principles. We thus see that a number of factors form the cumulative motive for EU membership – some cater more to the liberal paradigms and some to the constructivist and realist ones.

It is also not clear why the student has chosen to examine the question of economic spillover in the EU, when this is a very broadly studied issue. Moreover, "spillovers" (not just the economic ones) are at the core of the Neo-functional theory of European integration - indeed, the theory explain the process of integration particularly through the lens of spillovers.

The fourth chapter claims to be the main analytical part and "economic analysis", yet it barely scratches the surface of economic spillover to provide an authoritative argument. First, the definition of "economic spillover" is extremely limited and not based in solid existing literature. If spillover effects are the author's prime concern, more space should have been devoted to the concept and its various definitions, and especially, to the indicators that are crucial for measuring economic spillover.

I am not persuaded by the author's choice of "identifiers of economic spillover". For instance, his conceptualization of GDP for the study – as he says, "This translates that a higher GDP, on average, means the more spending power a (*sic*) individual in that nation has" (p. 42) – rather refers to purchasing power parity (PPP) and could have been also included among the identifiers. Since the author's definition of economic spillover is not set in existing literature, it seems to the reader that the subsequent choice of identifiers is rather random

and haphazard. Why is capital inflow and outflow not included? How is employment relevant for spillover, if the outflow of workforce is not considered (e.g. Poland)?

The "Macro-analysis" (chapter 4.3) is thus very basic – even banal – and does not tell us anything beyond what we already know. A comparison of the GDP development, inflation and employment in the observed countries is available in numerous secondary sources and the author did not need to create new graphs in R Studio (he is not using regression analysis, though, at all).

All in all, the thesis is necessarily a disappointment and is borderline acceptable. However, since I knew Sebastian as a witty and intelligent student from my classes, I believe he deserves a chance to defend his poorly executed thesis before the commission. The thesis does employ some theoretical frameworks, works with primary material, and has a logical structure (despite some logical fallacies in the argument). Its general, overarching argument is fairly clear and the research query does make sense – but it would be a contribution to existing knowledge only if it were published 40 or 50 years ago. So much has been written about economic spillovers among EU members in the meantime (works, which are not much reflected in Sebastian's text), that the submitted thesis has little relevance.

Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F): E

Suggested questions for the defence are:

- 1. Could you place your conception of economic spillover in the EU into the context of existing definitions in secondary literature? What identifiers would you say your thesis is lacking in order to assess economic spillover of EU membership?**
- 2. In the title of your thesis, you use the term "Europeanization", which does not necessarily relate to EU membership (even non-EU members can get "europeanized"). Is there a reason for this particular choice of words? And how do your assumptions relate to the "Europeanization" of non-members?**

I recommend the thesis for final defence.

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.