

Name of the student:	Meri Kajaia
Title of the thesis:	Democratization and Europeanization in Georgia
Reviewer:	Dr Maxine David, Leiden University

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

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

The student explores the political discourse of Georgian leaders and the Opposition over the 1991-2022 period with a view to: i) identifying changes and the political choices leaders made in respect of relations with the EU and democracy; ii) drawing conclusions about leadership styles in Georgia. The research would have been better formulated as two clear questions rather than ambitions but nevertheless, there is a clear focus and the student does push consistently towards delivering evidenced conclusions in respect of that focus. There is no doubting the topicality of the subject matter and there is a clear relevance to the MA EPS degree programme. I would have liked to see more direct and explicit engagement with the question of significance – the why it matters question. This is, not least, because it would have required the student to reflect more on the positive attributes of the thesis. As it is, there is a tendency to hide those attributes under a lot of bushels.

The review of the literature is closely connected to the RQs and the ultimate analysis. This was a good example of a literature review in terms of the fact that clear conceptual debates are identified and the student's good critical engagement with the literature. There was a good deal of complexity engaged with in an accessible fashion. More citations were needed, however, for the reader to know which particular scholars are being relied upon and some more comprehensiveness since there were moments when the discussion was a little too narrow. There is a small problem on p. 22 where the student relies on a work published in 1997 without problematising this in terms of whether the ideas there remain valid in light of changes since then. Nevertheless, there is much to commend in the literature review.

2. ANALYSIS

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

The thesis is extremely strong in respect of the reliance on primary sources and the analysis of them. Ultimately, the reader is treated to thick description of political leadership (and opposition, though to a lesser degree) over the vast majority of the post-Cold War period and learns an awful lot along the way. The concepts explored in the literature review are operationalised to a very good degree in the empirical work, though this could have been signalled more clearly at the beginning of chapter 3. That said, ultimately, the links between the literature review and the empirical work are unusually strong. The discussion of method comes in an odd place – I expect to see a separate Methods chapter in which a student can speak through methodological issues before clarifying the precise method they will apply. This is where the thesis is weakest. This impacts upon analysis in that more engagement here might have made the student see that some more context was needed to assist the reader with less familiarity with the subject matter. They may also have stumbled across work that gave them better insights into how to deliver a good comparative analysis through a different structure, e.g. the student might have structured the thesis by the themes rather than by the leaders.

3. CONCLUSIONS

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

The research questions are answered, albeit the first is more richly answered than the second. There are clear warrants for the claims the student makes. The persuasiveness is a little more questionable since the reader has to hold a lot in their head before getting to final conclusions which clarify where the empirical analysis was going. That said, the final conclusion is underwritten, which is a shame since this means the student does not sufficiently talk through the significance of the analysis in terms of that why it matters question. It would have been good to see more that was generalized back to leadership matters, for instance – there is a little here but more was possible.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

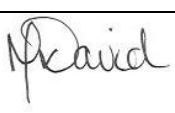
(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout)

The thesis is largely well-written, there is some usage of incorrect words but ultimately meaning is clear. The tone is appropriately academic throughout, except contractions should not be used. The thesis uses a recognisable and consistent reference system, although I would have liked to see more referencing through the thesis to clarify whose voice I was hearing. This is not to suggest any plagiarism, it is more of a courtesy to the reader. The thesis is well-presented. The largest problem here is with structure, which has been alluded to above but warrants more detail. That very large empirical chapter unbalances the thesis as a whole and relieves the need for the student to deliver interim conclusions that would have assisted the reader in understanding the significance. A different form of structuring would have more easily permitted the breaking down of that chapter into 2 or 3 different chapters.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

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

The thesis delivers extremely well in respect of empirical research and analysis in which the reader is treated to rich and thick description of political leadership in Georgia since 1991, with a view to understanding the contradictions and tensions we are seeing in Georgia's political orientation today. The thesis is weaker on the discussion of method and in the thinking of structure.

Grade	C (7.4)
Date:	Signature:
14 September 2023	

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'.