

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

GPS – Geopolitical Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	Russian patronage to unrecognized states since the annexation of Crimea: A cross case study of the Republic of Abkhazia and the PMR
Author of the thesis:	Heidi Tilse Koelle
Referee (incl. titles):	Mgr. Bohumil Doboš

Remark: It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 500 words long. In case you will assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	5
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	10
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	8
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	15
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	0
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)	38
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	F

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the 5 numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Theoretical background:

The theoretical background deals with patron-client relationship among de facto states and comprises of the state-building analysis inside the selected unrecognized states. The first issue is conceptual (why is Hong Kong included in the category). The selection of the defined concepts is vague and not deep enough. The part called "theoretical background" is itself rather confusing. While the combination of approaches can be a relevant way to proceed, the clarity of the selection is complicated by unclear goal and its mismatch with the methods selected (see below).

2) Contribution:

The contribution of the work is negatively affected by the unclear structure and goals of the thesis. The comparison is based on a large amount of data which are, nevertheless, not establishing a clear framework. Despite the fact that the issue raised is a relevant one, the contribution towards the field is hampered by this lack of focus.

3) Methods:

Methodology concerning interviews is really interesting and the possible description of the prevailing narrative related to the two case studies can make a valuable research. It is hard to evaluate the utility of the research question as the first one is formulated in a way that makes it really hard to understand. The analysis of the relations and the state-building process is based on broad literature review but the two parts do not form a coherent picture. If the aim of the thesis was reformulated towards a more interpretative research, the gathered data would make an important basis for a valuable contribution. If the amount of original data is insufficient then the combination with a broader, second-sourced based analysis make sense but would need to be much clearer. The comparison of the two cases lack previously defined criteria or factors.

4) Literature:

It is unclear whether the direct quotations are always cited correctly (e.g. Riegl, Doboš citation from p. 26-27). Beside the point of unclear and sometimes confused referencing, the literature list is rich and the author seems to have a good overview regarding both theoretical and empirical works.

5) Manuscript form:

The manuscript does not follow any basic formal criteria. These issues are connected to text formatting, include incorrect information (e.g., supervisor's name), and the whole text is looking like a draft version of the thesis, not the final product. The text includes language mistakes as well (e.g., its's on p. 5, incoherent use of capital letters). Citation norm is uneven and not clearly followed. Some statements are not cited (e.g. Putin, p. 31), maps are not cited.

Overall, the manuscript holds a large potential regarding the amount of data gathered and a clear amount of knowledge held by the author. Nevertheless, the lack of focus and the formal shortcomings prevent it from receiving a positive evaluation. If the author consults with the supervisor and work on the highlighted issues (mainly regarding the focus of the research, clearer method and following of the formal structure), the thesis can be a valuable contribution to the field of unrecognized states. In the current state it is a draft version that cannot be recommended for a successful defense.

DATE OF EVALUATION: 21. 5. 2018

Referee Signature

The referee should give comments to the following requirements:

1) THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: Can you recognize that the thesis was guided by some **theoretical fundamentals** relevant for this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts omitted? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently incorporated with the topic and hypotheses tested?

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

2) CONTRIBUTION: Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and relevant empirical material. Is there a distinct **value added** of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain **why** the observed phenomena occurred? Were the policy implications well founded?

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

3) METHODS: Are the **hypotheses** for this study clearly stated, allowing their further verification and testing? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and **analytical tools** used in the thesis relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the aspiration level of the study? Is the thesis **topic comprehensively analyzed** and does the thesis not make trivial or irrelevant detours off the main body stated in the thesis proposal? More than 10 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

4) LITERATURE REVIEW: The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way and disposes with a representative bibliography. (Remark: references to Wikipedia, websites and newspaper articles are a sign of **poor research**). If they dominate you cannot give more than 8 points. References to books published by prestigious publishers and articles in renowned journals give much better impression.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

5) MANUSCRIPT FORM: The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate language and style, including academic **format** for quotations, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking**.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Czech grading
91 – 100	A	= excellent
81 - 90	B	= good
71 – 80	C	= satisfactory
61 - 70	D	= satisfactory
51 - 60	E	
0	F	= fail (not recommended for defence)