

## **Review on a Ph.D. dissertation**

Ekaterina Ananyeva, Russia as a rising power in multilateral institutions

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The submitted Ph.D. thesis deals with an important topic of the Russia's participation in international institutions. In spite of the decrease in the Russia's power, the country still belongs to one of the contemporary major powers. Yet, the illiberal nature of the Russia's domestic regime might weaken a natural drive of the country towards a more intensive participation in the current international institutions since the majority of them are a product of the liberal international order. Hence, it is desirable to analyze how Russia actually behaves in international institutions. However, the research on this topic is not very extensive. Hence, it should be appreciated that the author chose this theme for her Ph.D. research.

What is also positive is that the thesis is well grounded in a review of the existing literature on several related topics. Moreover, the thesis is based on a generally valid theoretical framework constituted by rational functionalism. The author considers this approach a 40 years long tradition of research on international institutions that argues that the attitudes of states towards those institutions are primarily driven by their interests. More specifically, she considers the principal-agent perspective to be particularly important for her analysis.

In the theoretical core of the thesis, the author develops the following hypotheses:

H1 When Russia holds a strong position in a multilateral institution established after the end of the Cold War, it leads to the country's support for the IO.

H1.2 When Russia is among the co-establishers of an institution established during the Cold War and maintains a strong position there, this contributes to the supportive attitude.

H2 When Russia holds a weak position in a multilateral institution, this leads to its challenger position within the IO.

The strongest aspect of the thesis is the empirical part since it relies on the author's own and extensive primary research. More specifically, the author created a comprehensive dataset of Russian statements on various international institutions. This was supplemented by three case studies.

The author reacted adequately to my critical comments on the previous version of the dissertation. I would still find to be more suitable to treat Russia simply as a major power and not as a rising power as there are both logical and empirical reasons for which Russia is not part of the latter category.

As for the theoretical framework, the presentation of rational functionalism is now clearer. Nevertheless, I do not find a greater fit between the principal-agent approach that is now stressed by the author and the content of the analysis. The PA approach primarily deals with the institutional design and possible with design preferences of states – and none of those is the core subject of this dissertation. Hence, I see a sort of disconnection between the theoretical approach and the hypotheses (I still suppose that the hypotheses do not result very much of the chosen theoretical base).

More substantively, a link between a strong position and support is not as obvious as the author assumes. It would require more argumentation on the logical/theoretical side. Related to this is the contestable assumption that a country has a stronger position in an institution in which it has participated since its beginning. In advancing this argument, the author briefly refers to some theoretical works but I am not sure that those works really make the argument in the way the author develops it. The author would need to justify this assumption much more convincingly.

The selection of the OSCE, the SCO, and the WTO for case studies is to some extent reasonable. However, there are many other institutions that would fit with the criteria. The thesis should explain better why exactly those three were selected.

As mentioned, the empirical analysis represents a decent amount of work and a valuable contribution. However, it is a little bit too simplistic to presume that positive statements (in the way they are defined by the thesis) imply support for the institution, while negative ones indicate opposition. This should be explained and justified more persuasively.

Overall, the thesis provides a valuable analysis of the Russia's attitude towards to international institutions and I consequently recommend the thesis for the final defense.

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13. 9. 2020