

Reader's report on the final draft of Mr. Andrej Semenov's thesis entitled 'Institution Building in Post-Conflict Areas: The Quest for Legitimate Institutions in Kosovo'

This is the second draft, for some reason named the 'final draft', of the thesis produced by Mr. Semenov, who has been so kind to include a list of changes made to the initial draft submitted back in May 2020. The thesis has been improved, though, on the one hand, certain changes that the author claims to have been done are somehow missing from this version of the text. On the other hand, there are several quite problematic claims that in my opinion make this piece of academic writing unpublishable in its current form should the author want to capitalize on his work and decide to publish sections of the thesis in an academic journal (or thesis as a whole somewhere else).

First of all, although the author claims that the text has been edited, there are instances, such as on pages III, 2, and 9 indicating that the text would welcome yet another proofreading. I am going to list only a couple of examples found on pages III, 2, 9 respectively: "Acknowledges"; "academic **stuff**"; "But my biggest thanks of all **are** reserved for my parents"; "**however, briefly** discuss this vicious historical cycle, which alternates between 'a Serbian aggressor and Albanian victims' and 'an Albanian aggressor and Serbian victims', will be briefly discussed in Chapter 2"; "to a certain **extend**". I presume, to start with, that the author wanted to say "acknowledgment(s)". In addition, I urge the author not to use the word "stuff" in his thesis due to it being a colloquial (American English) expression rather than academic. More than that, the author should pay attention to the use of capital letters, proper tense use, as well as proper use of English (in this case there is no subject in the given sentence on page 2, while the example found on page 9 indicates that the author has used a verb instead of a noun, i.e. "extent"), with the listed examples of incorrect usage of English indicating that the thesis warrants professional copy-editing.

Second, I again need to ask the author to seriously consider rejecting phrases such as "horribly wrong" (page 12), as I am one of those individuals who believes that such language has absolutely no place in academic writing of the kind we have here. If the author wishes to be respected for his work, then he needs to produce his thesis in the language that is less colloquial and more formal.

Third, I am honestly very surprised by the following statement on page 13, as I am not sure what it actually means and how it actually relates to the discussion provided by the author: "No matter whether Kosovo is perceived as a sovereign state or a colonised entity, the discussion overlooks the role of Serbia; thus necessarily leads to the conclusion that Kosovo 'earned' its sovereignty." I have the feeling that the author wants to, though not explicitly, claim that Kosovo is an example of a state, unlike, for instance, Serbia that has been mentioned in the same context, that has actually *not* earned its sovereignty (at least not in the 'proper' way, though I am not sure what that 'proper' way according to the author really is/would be). What makes the author produce such claims? Frankly speaking, I cannot help but think that the author has tackled the issue at hand without fully explaining his own personal position, acting in a manner of somebody (writing a policy paper on behalf of an organization/think-tank, etc.) who appears, or at least pretends to appear, fully detached from the said topic.

To continue by broadening my previous point, I shall refer to the author's claims on page 14 that are yet again puzzling for me: "This is the exact subject of the thesis: to propose a solution for Kosovo's political status in times when neither the so-called West or East, nor NATO, Europe, the Catholic Church, the Orthodox societies, or the Muslim community, can find a consensus within their own spheres. And certainly, there is no precise mechanism to determine whether the USA, the UK, and Italy are more 'significant' than China, Russia, and Spain, or whether particular Muslim, Catholic, or Orthodox societies have a higher sense of justice. Similarly, Kosovo's history is one of excruciating pain.....". I am, to be honest, not really aware of discussions on Kosovo within, for instance, the Catholic Church, nor do I see the importance of these for the thesis at hand. Are these views that significant that they influence the case at hand in any considerable manner? If so, how has the author arrived at such conclusions and what methods has he used? More than that, when the author says Europe, does he mean EU? I imagine that the examples provided by the author are to indicate how profoundly and overwhelmingly the Kosovo issue has influenced international relations so far, which, in all honesty, I am not sure I would agree with. I am absolutely aware of the issue at hand and its wider international importance though, but I am not ready to make the same claims and go to the length that the author of the thesis has done. This particular approach of the author characterizing the Kosovo issue as an absolute watershed in international relations is in my opinion wrong. Perhaps the author does not really think in this manner, but the way he has expressed himself suggests that he does.

In relation to my previous claims, there is again the issue of the language the author has used but that in my humble opinion he simply does not need, as in the reference to the history of Kosovo being "one of excruciating pain" (page 14). How does the author measure this pain if he claims it to be as it is? I am, to be honest, quite intrigued by this and tend to believe that that there may be some ulterior motives with the author directing him to produce a piece of writing like this.

To continue with and to address another document sent by the author, i.e. the report on changes made in the thesis, on page 3 he claims that "The vast majority of the member states recognise Kosovo; however, some of them, such as the Czech Republic and Poland, refuse to establish diplomatic relations with Kosovo". Is this claim actually correct? I would like to ask the author to check the following link and then try to answer my question: https://www.mzv.cz/pristina/en/bilateral_and_multilateral_relations/head_of_the_czech_embassy_received_by.html

In respect to the previous claim by the author that is in my opinion untrue, I would like to ask him to clarify the point on page 5 of the aforementioned report, whereby he states the following: "Policy-makers manifest the same propensities as the ethnic groups they analyse. They often are unwilling to take into consideration all available data and arbitrarily select facts that best fit their narrative. The fundamental result is the thesis Kosovo as a sui generis case." Apart from the issue of incorrect use of English, whereby one should say "They are often...", there is this claim on policy-makers being unwilling to address all data regarding Kosovo (somewhat ushering a sense of mistrust in this respect). How can the author make such a general claim, on the one hand? On the other, how does the author actually know this? Has he done any research in this regard? If so, why has this not been included in the section on contribution to the field? Last of all, what specifically makes the author provide such claims? It is

precisely this sort of claims that I find extremely troubling in this thesis, and, in all honesty, do not really know why the author has decided to include points/claims in his work.

To make my last claim on the aforementioned report and refer to page 9, I have found the following claim problematic: “Further, Estonia, Luxembourg, and the UK advanced the claim that Kosovo manifests *sui generis* in the context of violent break-up of Yugoslavia. The question is why it applies only to Serbia and Kosovo and not to other entities composing successor states of the SFRY.” The author is, I hope, well aware of the fact that the international community, chiefly the (Western) European states, clearly indicated back in the summer of 1991 and within the “Opinions of the Badinter Arbitration Committee” that Kosovo was *not* to be taken into consideration independence-wise *regardless* of already considerable ethnic tensions in this part of the then Yugoslavia and unwillingness of Belgrade to be less heavy-handed towards the Kosovar Albanians in general (which Belgrade ultimately did address after a belated American push and the so-called ‘Christmas warning’ to Milosevic). If this is the case, does this make the author change, or at least reexamine, his claims? Which other entity/entities does the author refer to in his thesis? Are these, as I suspect, areas with Serbian majority, albeit not all of them were fully monoethnic, in the then Croatia? I do not believe this constitutes the same case (if the author really has had these areas in mind). In that regard, I suggest the author address Alain Pellet’s contribution to European Journal of International Law in order to fact-check his claims.

Last of all, I honestly do not see the reason why the sources used in the thesis have been divided in the following categories: “Books, Chapters in Books, and Journal Articles”; “Documents and Speeches”; “Media”. Is this some sort of a standard that I may not be familiar with? If so, then please disregard this point.

I recommend the thesis be accepted for defense before the commission at Charles University **subject to the author addressing the issues** stated in this report.

With regards,
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