

**Evaluation of Artemyi Bykov's Bachelor Thesis *History as Political Weapon: Conflicting Narratives of Autocephaly in Ukraine* (Prague 2021)**

I appreciate that Artemyi Bykov has worked with a broad scope of literature and with historical sources. I believe the Introduction should open in a more sophisticated way. Already the second paragraph starts with the formulation "Another important topic aside from canonical discussions". The author could for example specify the research fields in which the thesis is embedded and to which it contributes. However, I appreciate that the student has formulated two research questions:

"What are the narratives that define the Ukrainian autocephaly? And another important research question is: what is the impact of the state in the autocephalous movements?"

The chapter on methodology is not sufficiently elaborated. In fact, it does not mention any relevant methods at all. The author mentions "historical method" and "the method of historical periodization" but they have nothing in common with the up-to-date historical research. Specifically, Bykov writes "The historical method, the researching and analysis of primary and secondary sources is the main method of this thesis". This phrase is too general and vague. We cannot speak about one universal historical method. Neither do we speak in Central Europe about primary and secondary sources but rather about archival sources, edited sources and scholarly literature. The term "primary and secondary sources" does not come from the sphere of history and archival research but rather from broader humanities and social sciences and it is too general for history as a discipline. Similarly, there does not exist anything like "the method of historical periodization". Given the thesis title (*History as Political Weapon: Conflicting Narratives...*), new political history or historical narrative analysis could offer relevant methodologies. Comparative history or memory studies approaches would also be very useful – just to give examples of what the chapter could have thematised. In fact, the student does implicitly compare the Orthodox Church with the Roman Catholic Church, so there clearly are comparisons. Nonetheless, that they are unreflected.

Some passages are difficult to understand. It would be suitable if the student could explain them during his defence. For example, at page 12 he writes: "What is the main function of autocephaly in Eastern Orthodoxy? It appears to be that the division of one universal church into the local one could be attributed to nationalism. There are existing theories in which the development of autocephalous churches relates to the nationalistic tendencies." Specifically, what does he mean by the term "nationalism"? It is most suitable for the 19<sup>th</sup>

century and post-19<sup>th</sup> century relating to nation and revival of national consciousness. Other usages should be clarified. US-American scholars tend to employ the term in the way that is too broad and of little use.

In his last sentence Artemyi Bykov writes: “I personally hope that more interesting articles and documents will be produced and will become part of the religious and political discourse that we, researchers, would be eager to analyze and interpret.” This sounds a bit puzzling. At the thesis defence Artemyi could explain what he means by “more interesting articles and documents”. Should not a discourse analysis focus on all relevant media production?

In sum, due to the lack of theoretical-methodological reflection the thesis is rather dry and descriptive. Some sentences cannot be understood (e.g. p. 58: “As the initial nature of the religious autocephaly is being in accordance with the changing in the political situation). The student has clearly underestimated his time schedule. At the thesis defence he should develop in more detail what he means by conflicting or competing narratives.

Nonetheless, I believe it meets the necessary requirements for a BA thesis. I can summarize that I formally recommend the thesis to the defence procedure and suggest **B – C** (i.e. very good to good), depending on the defence.

In Budapest, September 9, 2021

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Thesis Reviewer