

Name of the student:	Igor Nunes Vidal
Title of the thesis:	Autocratization outbreaks: the Polish and Hungarian responses to the Covid-19 pandemic and their early effects on democracy in comparison to Italy
Reviewer:	Joanna Orzechowska-Wa�awska, PhD

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

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

The thesis takes on relevant and timely problem of political responses to Covid-19 pandemic in three European countries: Poland, Hungary and Italy. Author presents and discusses measures against the spread of pandemics taken in those countries in the first half of 2020 and analyses their legality, compliance with the rule of law principle and the impact of those policies on the state of democracy. Positioned against the theoretical developments on populism, the author skilfully compares pandemic management in selected countries and draws conclusions that significantly contribute to the debate on the Western and Eastern types of populism in Europe.

The literature review is excellent. Author has skilfully made use of critical works on the populism, and has also been able himself to contribute, through empirical analysis, to the subject.

2. ANALYSIS

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

The research is based on the content analysis of legal documents along with the qualitative comparative analysis of policy measures. The analysis is very well positioned in the theoretical debate on populism and is well linked to the key sources. The conceptual framework is clear and well-written.

3. CONCLUSIONS

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

Based on extensive and detailed analysis of legal and political documents, the author was able to prove the instrumentalization hypothesis, namely, that Central and Eastern European populism, as exemplified by Polish and Hungarian case, has used the spread of pandemics to further move forward the ongoing processes of autocratization, that had started before the spread of the virus. The pandemics – as the thesis demonstrates – has created a set of circumstances that allowed the populist governments to strengthen the scope of autocratic power in both Poland and Hungary and diminish the authority and importance of democratic institutions and compromise the rule of law principle.

The choice of the strategies and their divergent relation towards the concept of regionalism, checks-and balances between powers and institutions, and Constitution as demonstrated by selected cases shows visible differences between Eastern and Western type of European populism.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

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

The thesis is very well written. The language is clear, and understandable beyond the scope of the discipline. The layout is correct and format and style meet academic standards.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

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

Overall, the thesis is excellent. Author has embarked on very ambitious and difficult subject, and was able to deliver interesting results. The analysis is interesting and very thorough. Not only does the thesis shed light on political management of pandemics, but it actually makes a very significant contribution to the debate on populism.

The only weak point is perhaps the length of the thesis. Some passages could perhaps be more concise.

Grade (A-F):	A
Date:	Signature:
September 27, 2021	Joanna Orzechowska-Waclawska

classification scheme

Percentile	Prague		Krakow		Leiden		Barcelona	
	Score Range	%	Score	%	Score Range	%	Score Range	%
A (91-100)	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'.