

Name of the student:	Thomas BAKER
Title of the thesis:	The EU in the eyes of the Australian elite 2026-2019: perceptions in the context of Brexit
Reviewer:	Yannis Karagiannis

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

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

The research deals with the way some Australian analysts view the EU. This is an interesting and indeed quite topical issue. What is less clear is whether the author is more interested in the variation in the EU’s image abroad (see, for example, his comments at page 4, second paragraph), or in the variation in Australian experts’ views of the EU. In addition, although I genuinely find the work done by the author very interesting, I thought that it is still too descriptive. I would strongly encourage him to build on this work in view of exploring the causes of the EU being viewed differently in different countries, or the causes of different Australian experts viewing the EU differently.

2. ANALYSIS

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

The author develops several interesting thoughts about the role of think tanks and experts in the policy-making process, as well as about the importance of a country’s (or entity’s, since the EU is not a country) image abroad. The author is also very transparent regarding the procedures he followed in order to define elites, select think tanks and interviewees, and conduct his critical reading.

Having said that, the thesis is (still) not based on theory and methods. Despite what we read in page 3 to the effect that Chapter 1 will conclude with the enumeration of some hypotheses derived from the literature, the literature review does not lead to anything like clear and theoretically justified testable hypotheses. Similarly, there is no real research design informing the methodological choices of the author (e.g. no focus on one carefully defined dependent variable, no methodological justification for the case selection, no information about the exact wording of the interview questions, no measure of intercoder reliability of the “critical reading” scores, no attempt at estimation and generalization to the entire Australian elite system, no causal hypothesis-testing, no attempt to discover whether any change in perceptions that coincides with Brexit might actually be due to other factors, etc). On the contrary, by resting on readings and interviews of people with an uncommonly deep knowledge of the EU, the thesis reaches conclusions that may be severely biased (i.e. not representative at all of the entire population of influential Australian elites).

3. CONCLUSIONS

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

I prefer to read this thesis as an intermediate report where the author lists some of his (mostly very interesting) findings, rather than as a finished product where the author tries to make a persuasive argument about some (descriptive or causal) inferences.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

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

There are several typos (perhaps around one per page), but otherwise the language is appropriate. Sometimes, the author repeats himself (e.g. the last 5 or 6 lines of the second paragraph of page 2 are repeated as the last phrases of Chapter 1).

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

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

The main strength of the paper is the empirical work done by the author. He has clearly taken the time to read through numerous and lengthy report, and to contact and interview knowledgeable Australians. In addition, despite the typos, the author writes well and has produced a manuscript which is a pleasure to read.

The main weaknesses of the paper are the following two:

- It does not focus on the description and the explanation of the variation of one clearly defined dependent variable. Accordingly, we do not know whether he is more interested in how the EU is perceived abroad (in which case he might have needed to compare perceptions from Australia with perceptions from New Zealand, or India, or South Africa, etc), or in how different Australian people see the EU (in which case he might have needed to compare people who've worked in Europe versus people who have not been there, people who feel closer to the English-speaking world versus people who don't, people who are of British descent versus people who are of not, etc etc)
- It does not come up with a certain number (perhaps 4 or 5) of testable hypotheses about the variation of that dependent variable (whichever one that is).

Grade (A-F):	D
Date:	Signature:
September 3, 2021	Yannis Karagiannis

classification scheme

Percentile	Prague		Krakow		Leiden		Barcelona	
	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'.