

Name of the student:	Tom Dautzenberg
Title of the thesis:	Improving the 'Minimalist State': The Targeting of EU State Building Policies in Kosovo
Reviewer:	Tomáš Weiss

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

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

This is a very policy practice-oriented thesis that aims at evaluating the targeting of EU policies in Kosovo through a clearly defined conceptual lenses of the “minimalist state”. It is well connected to the field – the literature on state building and EU external policies, particularly its policies in the Western Balkans. The research question is relevant as far as it provides a novel perspective of the EU’s activities. It is rather limited in scope as it only focuses on the targeting and not the conduct of the policies, but the text is very open about this limitation and it also allows the author to answer the research question fully and persuasively.

2. ANALYSIS

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

The thesis ponders at great length about the usefulness of the “minimalist state” concept for the purpose of the research. The concept itself is introduced and explained well, its connection to / distinction from other related concepts is presented. The chosen method is appropriate and explained. The author admits that the very concept of minimalist state cannot be found anywhere in the analysed documents and therefore, he searched the texts using “keywords”. However, he does not explain what these keywords were and how they were chosen. While the reader has got some understanding what these may have been, they should have been mentioned explicitly. The selection of analysed texts is explained properly and makes sense. The handling of sources is adequate.

3. CONCLUSIONS

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

The thesis is persuasive in presenting the answer. Both the strength and the limitation is the fact that it is a very limited answer to a specific question. It is, indeed, interesting that the EU addresses only some of the aspects that seem to be relevant for lifting Kosovo from the minimalist state situation. At the same time, the findings bid for the question whether it is possible to address some of the issues (scope of state policies) without resolving others (external and domestic legitimacy). Does that mean that there is a hierarchy among the individual minimalist state aspects? And what does that mean for the overall answer about the targeting of the EU policies?

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

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

The language is appropriate. The layout could have been improved: introducing spaces between sections would break the text visually and help the reader navigate through the text. Some repetition should be avoided. For example, the reader can read the Florian Bieber’s definition of the minimalist state several times at various places in the text. Academic standards are observed, the citation style is without any problems. The text is an original contribution to the knowledge in the field.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

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

Tom Dautzenberg has written a solid thesis, which has got a practical as well as theoretical relevance. It is focused very narrowly which means that it will find a rather small group of interested readers, but it also manages to answer the question fully and persuasively. There are minor issues concerning the organisation of the text and its layout as well as the explanation of the method used. During the oral defence, the following questions could be discussed:

- Is there a hierarchy among the individual aspects of the minimalist state? What does it mean for your answer if yes?
- How do you interpret the current round of open dispute around Kosovo through the lenses of your research?

Grade (A-F):	B
Date:	Signature:
19/08/2022	