

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

GPS – Geopolitical Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	Heidi Koelle
Author of the thesis:	Russian patronage to unrecognized states since the annexation of Crimea: A cross case study of the Republic of Abkhazia and the PMR
Referee (incl. titles):	Martin Riegl

Remark: It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 500 words long. In case you will assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	17
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	17
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	18
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	18
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	4
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)	74
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	C

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the 5 numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Theoretical background:

The author has framed her research within the theory of constructive realism which allows her to properly analyze geopolitical behavior, drivers or hidden motives of Kremlin to back the Republic of Abkhazia and the Dniester Republic. The realistic point of view fits much better than works of O'Loughlin or Comai who has been trying to portray such entities as internally developing free of Russian influence over internal affairs. Such an angle is not only naïve but also dangerous.

2) Contribution:

Heidi has chosen a geopolitically relevant topic which attracts more and more scholarly attention. Following the geopolitical turmoil manifested by the annexation of Crimea again brought to the spotlight the role of Russia in creating and backing the string of secessionist entities which emerged in the so called Russia's Near Abroad.

3) Methods:

The methods applied in the thesis are relevant and sufficiently explained by the authors. Selection of both case studies makes sense, use of the participation observation and the subsequent

application of interpretative research is the right way of conducting research. The author has shown her capability to use proper methodology and its use to achieve the declared goal.

4) Literature:

Regarding the source, Mrs. Koelle has proven a good orientation in the existing literature, although adding some other authors' works such as J.Ker-Lindsay, M.Sterio, E.Berg, S.Pegg would be beneficial. However the formal aspect of the list of sources is chaotic and gives very poor impression. Although I am far from being an egocentric person, citing mine and B.Doboš' work in the following format is barely acceptable: "Riegl, M., Doboš, B., Bar, S., Baar, V., Bečka, J., Berg, E., . . . Rudincová, K. (2017). *Unrecognized states and secession in the 21st century*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer." Different fonts are used in the list of sources or some pieces are not listed in the alphabetic order.

5) Manuscript form:

The overall impression is to a large extent damaged by its formal layout. Although the thesis meets formal criteria (length, structure, quality of language), at least the last moment consultation with advisor would help to eliminate major formal flaws (using different fonts, etc.). Secondly putting the map of breakaway territories in the very beginning of the paper, in fact instead of introduction gives rather a weird impression,

DATE OF EVALUATION:

Referee Signature

The referee should give comments to the following requirements:

1) THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: Can you recognize that the thesis was guided by some **theoretical fundamentals** relevant for this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts omitted? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently incorporated with the topic and hypotheses tested?

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

2) CONTRIBUTION: Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and relevant empirical material. Is there a distinct **value added** of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain **why** the observed phenomena occurred? Were the policy implications well founded?

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

3) METHODS: Are the **hypotheses** for this study clearly stated, allowing their further verification and testing? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and **analytical tools** used in the thesis relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the aspiration level of the study? Is the thesis **topic comprehensively analyzed** and does the thesis not make trivial or irrelevant detours off the main body stated in the thesis proposal? More than 10 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

4) LITERATURE REVIEW: The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way and disposes with a representative bibliography. (Remark: references to Wikipedia, websites and newspaper articles are a sign of **poor research**). If they dominate you cannot give more than 8 points. References to books published by prestigious publishers and articles in renowned journals give much better impression.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

5) MANUSCRIPT FORM: The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate language and style, including academic **format** for quotations, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking**.

Strong Average Weak
20 10 0 points

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Czech grading
91 – 100	A	= excellent
81 - 90	B	= good
71 – 80	C	= satisfactory
61 - 70	D	= satisfactory
51 - 60	E	
0	F	= fail (not recommended for defence)