

Supervisor's review of the thesis "Multi-Vectorism in Belarusian Foreign Policy" by Haylee Behrends

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Haylee Behrends wrote her thesis on the problem of Belarusian multipolar policy, to a great extent a declarative position juxtaposed to the reality of dependence on Russia. Such evaluation of the declarations of the multipolarity is therefore important contribution to further understanding of current Belarus. The author links Belarusian identity with the country's foreign policy.

In her thesis, the author writes extensively about the topic of Belarusian identity. However, the very link of identity with the multipolarity remains unclear. Although some explanation is provided on the page 18, some of its parts may be challenged. For instance, the sentence "The partnership with Russia was an ideological partnership for Lukashenka without any concrete economic ties" is extremely questionable due to the fact, that the subsidies from the Russian side represent a vital point for Lukashenka's political survival.

In the theoretical framework, the author rightly uses Keohane and Nye as the basis of her theory. However, the theory should be much better elaborated – how it relates to the Belarusian foreign policy? How it is related to the topic? Furthermore, the explanation of the very term of multivectoralism is missing at all.

Some of the sentences lack their proper preciseness: "Despite a relatively higher degree of dependence of post-Soviet states on Russia, Belarus included, interdependency used as a means to break away from dependence does not exist in the post-Soviet space as much as it would seem. The countries in this space today seek their own personal goals in foreign relations." Such sentence is hard to understand for me. In other cases, the author makes far-reaching statements, but without references: Lukashenka, and likely all the Belarusian people, appreciate the regime in place the way it is. "There are a few political dissidents who do not agree with the current regime, but they are few. The general assumption of the west is that most Belarusians are unhappy with the regime in place and wish to have a fully realized democracy but are unable to demand this out of fear of their government." (44)

Regretfully, some of the key sources remained unemployed. Andrew Wilson and his Belarus, the last European dictatorship, is the most prominent. However, some other, such as materials from OSW or RFE/RL should have been included. Resulting from this, the sources are barely sufficient (footnotes 31-43 relate to the same source). Deeper research in the databases licensed at the university or in google scholar would have revealed much deeper and wider range of sources. It is also in question, whether the problem of identity may be addressed only based on English language sources.

From the formal points, the thesis itself is very short. Only 61 pages and only 79 footnotes (including multiple footnotes to a single source in the literature review) is a low number for a master thesis. Furthermore, the list of literature should be separated at least between the primary sources and academic literature.

My overall evaluation is **good**.

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