

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE**  
**Faculty of Social Sciences**  
**Institute of International Studies**

**PROTOCOL ON DIPLOMA THESIS ASSESSMENT**  
**(Reviewer)**

Name of the student: **Farkhod Gaziev**

Title: ***EU Conditionality and the Russian-speaking Minority in the Baltic States: Problems of Integration During and Beyond EU Accession***

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Reviewer (external reviewers including the address and position): Mgr. Jan Váška, Ph.D.

*1. TOPIC AND OBJECTIVE (short information on the thesis, research objective):*

The dissertation sets out to assess the effectiveness of European Union's political conditionality in the case of the three Baltic States and their policies towards their Russian-speaking minorities. The research covers, with varying intensity, a very long period from the 1990s up to present. The author hypothesizes that (1) the effectiveness of EU conditionality in terms of influencing the policies of the governments of the respective states has been limited, on account (2) of a combination of domestic resistance and a fear of the Baltic states' government concerning Russia as the external national homeland of these minorities.

*2. CONTENT (complexity, original approach, argument, structure, theoretical and methodological backing, work with sources, appropriateness of annexes etc.):*

The topic turns out to be very ambitious in its twin goal to explore the effectiveness of EU conditionality and, secondarily, account for differences among the three Baltic states across an array of issue areas from political participation via citizenship law to education-related legislation, all that in a theoretically informed manner.

I fear the dissertation is let down by an unhelpful structure both in terms of the sequencing of chapters (why a chapter on methodology – no matter is actually saying close to nothing of importance and it does not give the reader a lead as to how the author will proceed to interrogate his hypotheses – before establishing the research objectives on the basis of literature review and theoretical discussion?) and of an often inadequate structure within chapters – a discussion freely flowing from one state to another and back (chapters 5 and 6) is not a good basis for a rigorous comparative discussion.

I assume the two central hypotheses as quoted on p. 13 build upon the works by Stokke and Kelley, but this should have been stated explicitly (all the lengthy – and worthwhile – discussion of the theoretical framework actually lead to no conclusion/outcome at all)! On p. 23-25 in that chapter, the author includes a misplaced and longish empirical discussion, on the other hand I failed to locate a clear definition and attribution of the “administration by conditionality” model, which the author presents on p. 19 as his conceptual prism. The literature review is interesting and useful in introducing text seminal for this research area, only the term “criteria” used when presenting Stokke 1995 appear not to actually denote criteria for assessing the effectiveness of conditionality mechanisms (as the author asserts) but rather, as flows from the rest of the paragraph, intervening variables affecting the effectiveness of the process.

It is a pity that chapter 6.3 is limited to a discussion of one particular policy step by the Russian government. In my view this does not suffice to assess the validity of the assumption made in Hypothesis 2 and as such it does not really warrant the sweeping conclusion to that chapter.

3. *FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE (quality of language, citation style, graphics, formal aspects etc.):*

As I am not native English speaker, I am not competent to evaluate the linguistic level of the dissertation. It is evident, though, that many formulations would have profited from more clarity and rigour – the methodology chapter offer plenty of examples, and for an example of a completely wooly statement see the first sentence of Chapter 3. There are typos in the text, too (“Schimmalfenmg”, p. 17, elsewhere “Scimmelfenning”). Citations are generally sound, but almost the entire chapter 6.3 is unsourced, including numerous quotes, which is of course unacceptable in academic literature. Some cited sources are missing in the final list of references – Kymlicka 2003 (p. 44), Klabbers 1999 (p. 32), all sources authored by Kochenov cited in chapter 5.2. In the two first cases, moreover, there are direct quotes without the exact page(s) being given in the references.

Other minor issues include a wrong heading to chapter 5.2 (“5.3” in the text), and the lack of further structuring (into paragraphs) of large bodies of text on pages 42-44 and in the conclusion, which makes the respective parts of text extremely difficult to follow.

4. *SHORT COMMENTS BY THE REVIEWER (overall impression, strengths and weaknesses, originality of ideas, achievement of the research objective etc.):*

The topic does provide a lot of promise but the dissertation does not fully live up to it; perhaps the entire research design was overly ambitious (and certainly the structuring of the thesis was rather unfortunate). The text does bring in some interesting empirical material, and it does offer insight into the body of theory and academic literature on the topic, but the link between the two might have been developed more fully. The dissertation suffers from a certain lack of clarity in discussion, and even in the explanation of the research design (What is the basis for the author’s hypotheses? What was the key for choosing the particular integration-related issues for analysis in chapter 6.2, and not others?) and methodology.

There are several shortcomings in citations, and the text would have hugely profited by proof-reading by native speaker. Academic texts should certainly refrain from normative statements like “Estonia’s and Latvia’s restrictive laws on Russian-speaking minority serve as repulsive forces against the Baltic Said” (p. 62)

That said, despite the critical comments made above this dissertation does meet the minimum criteria to be successfully defended as a Master thesis. It merits Charles University grade 3 (Good).

5. *QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED DURING THE DEFENCE (one to three):*

Has the author always been able to determine whether a particular positive step in Russian minority integration policy of one of the Baltic states was caused/induced by EU conditionality, by other (domestic) factors, or by a combination of the two? How, if at all, is it methodologically possible to “measure” the “net” effect of EU conditionality?

In which particular of the explored areas of minority integration has the EU conditionality been the most successful, and in which the least? Does theory and/or the existing body of academic literature suggest why it should be so?

Besides conditionality, the theoretical chapter mentions normative pressure as the second of the two instruments international actors have at their disposal to influence policies of national governments. In my opinion, this thread (normative pressure) quickly vanishes in the dissertation (after all it undertakes to discuss conditionality), only to reappear in the conclusion – could the author explain more clearly

how he proceeded to analytically distinguish between the two related mechanisms (conditionality-normative pressure)?

6. *(NON-)RECOMMENDATION AND SUGGESTED GRADE*  
*(excellent, very good, good, unsatisfactory): YES – GOOD (3)*

Date: 13 September 2017

Signature: