

Examiner's Report

KOTSUR Gleb Vladislavovich: NORMATIVE INTERACTION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE FIELD OF DEMOCRACY

Dissertation for an academic degree of Candidate of Political Science, St Petersburg State University

Gleb Kotsur's thesis deals with the normative interaction in EU-Russia relations particularly with regard to democracy. Theoretically, it applies the post-Marxist discourse analysis theory of Chantal Mouffe and Ernest Laclau to the normative relations between Moscow and Brussels. The empirical data consists of documents, speeches and other public material. Kotsur argues that the normative relationship between Russia and the EU in the field of democracy consists of the sum of two "self – discussions" or monologues instead of real interaction.

Kotsur's topic is timely and highly relevant for both the study of EU-Russia relations and for the overall practice of international relations concerning democracy and human rights. The theoretical approach he has adopted is sustained and motivated, although not entirely original, since for example Ian Manners has been trying to bridge his concept of normative power to Mouffe and Laclau's discourse analysis. However the author demonstrates good knowledge of existing research including relevant theoretical discussions particularly related to the broader approach of social constructivism as well as the empirical subject matter and he is able to master a wide array of topics. The author's analysis of the interaction between Russia and the EU and his criticism of other existing approaches, especially the concepts of life cycle and normative power, make a clear input to the existing knowledge and academic debate.

The overall structure of the thesis where the key chapters deal with three scenarios serves the thesis well. The style of writing is cogent, professional and scholarly, reflecting the candidate's good knowledge and analytical skills.

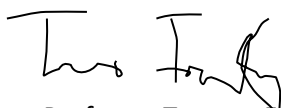
The conclusions are somewhat round but substantially relevant and in their main content valid. The author makes a number of intriguing observations but he could have been able to deepen and sharpen the results of the empirical case studies in some more detail and elaborate their relevance in contrast to other theories.

The thesis text is well written and there no major language errors. (In the translation Chantal Muff should be written Mouffe. It is correct in the references.)

Overall, the thesis provides a significant and substantial contribution to scholarship and merits the degree of Candidate of Political Science.

Signed:

Date: 11 February 2022



Professor Tuomas Forsberg
University of Helsinki