

To whom it may concern

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REVIEW OF THE THESIS TITLED 'NORMATIVE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE FIELD OF DEMOCRACY', submitted by Gleb Kotsur for the degree of Candidate of Political Sciences

The above thesis is sound and ambitious, demonstrating researcher's in-depth knowledge of the subject-matter and his ability to tackle complex ontological concepts analytical issues. The scope of his literature coverage is particularly impressive, and deserves high commendation! The chosen interpretivist focus on the normative interactions between Russia and the EU is truly ambitious, and Mr Kotsur seems to have done a good job with his analysis, and findings.

Nevertheless, there are some minor issues that I wish to highlight in hope that they will be addressed by Mr Kotsur during his viva:

- 1) Conceptual: I am rather puzzled why the researcher insists on framing his discussion in 'positivist and post-positivist' terms. Both approaches are of linear and predictable nature, and there is nothing linear or predictable in IR between Russia and the EU! In fact, the very fact that the researcher is drawing on the constructivist methodology takes him well beyond the former approach. Furthermore, the thesis would have benefited more if deeper engagement with the constructivist school in its diversity was undertaken even including post-structuralist discussions of the Self-Other relations there (See J. Edkins 1999 work especially).
- 2) Methodology: it is intriguing that the concept of life cycles was developed, and how it was methodologically operationalised and applied. What, in my view, remains missing, is the demonstration of the process as to how the researcher has arrived at specific conclusions; what kind of analysis has taken place and how – either in the thesis itself, or perhaps in an appendix – these conclusions were reached.
- 3) Findings: it is always important for this level of work to cover the question 'so what?' – so what that we have discovered that Self is not at all constitutive of Other in Russia-EU relations; it is often in opposition, or even ignorance of each other; rather than juxtaposition or an extension of Self in the Other. What does it tell us about the future of these relations; can rationalist projections of normative self-projects be altered to become congruent? Unfortunately, this part of the thesis was left open to speculation, leaving the reader somewhat unsatisfied.

All in all, however, the thesis exposes some profound work undertaken by the researcher, and his supervisor, clearly deserving high commendation and the appropriate degree.

Yours sincerely,



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