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Review of the doctoral dissertation

by magister Vladyslav Myroniuk, entitled *Consolidation of Independent Ukrainian State* prepared under the academic supervision of dr hab. Katarzyna Marzęda-Młynarska, prof. UMCS in the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism UMCS, Lublin 2024, pp. 223 (typescript).

Formal basis for preparing the review: Resolution No. 1/17s/2024 of the Scientific Council of the Institute of International Relations of UMCS of June 14, 2024.

General description

The reviewed doctoral dissertation consists of five substantive chapters, an introduction, conclusion and bibliography. Moreover, each chapter of the dissertation was provided with a short explanatory introduction and a short summary was included in the final part of the chapters. The structure of the dissertation presented by the author is logical and subordinated to the stated purpose of the work. In the *Introduction* of the dissertation, the Author formulates the basic research goal of his considerations, which is: „[...] to determine a shared/common political identity that can contribute to the consolidation of Ukrainian citizens and thus to the general consolidation of Ukrainian statehood” (p. 6). The main research question supporting the research objective concerns the point of how state structures could enhance transformation of citizens’ political identity toward more consolidated? (p. 6).

In order to comprehensively present Ukraine's consolidation challenges, the Author also specifies "additional research goals", which include: „1. To determine the state

consolidation process; 2. To determine the role of citizens, authority and territory in the process of state consolidation of Ukraine; 3. To determine political myths and their impact on the process of state consolidation” (p. 7).

To implement such ambitious research assumptions, it is necessary to define a time frame within which the researcher places his considerations. All the more so because the Russian aggression against Ukraine since 2014 has had a huge impact on state-building processes. Mr. Myroniuk explains the framework of the temporal caesura, which generally covers the 30th anniversary of Ukrainian sovereignty (1991-2021), but the indicated boundaries are not rigid, as the dissertation contains references to events before 1991 and after 2021 (p. 8).

In the Introduction, the Author carefully explained the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods, such as factor analysis, document analysis, data analysis, comparative analysis and historical analysis. Such an abundant list of research methods is intended to provide a comprehensive presentation of the dissertation's subject matter, which, by the way, the Author successfully accomplished. It should be noted that the Doctoral Student has explained in detail and clearly in the rather extensive Introduction possible doubts and questions of the reviewer regarding both the layout of the dissertation and the theoretical and methodological issues.

Detailed assessment

The first chapter of the dissertation, entitled *Concept of state consolidation*, presents the theoretical basis of the issue marked in the title. The Author of the dissertation reached out to the works of international relations theorists focusing attention on the problem of state consolidation. These include: K. Pawlowski, G. Jellinek, A. Giddens, A. Wendt, C. Taylor, D. Rustow, C. Parsons. It should be noted that the Author of the dissertation made a detailed analysis of theoretical approaches treating the understanding of state consolidation and pointed out its narrow treatment by selected theorists. The dissertation emphasized attention to the treatment of the concept of state consolidation by Ukrainian researchers and classified

various opinions on the indicated issue. On the basis of a comprehensive analysis of the treatment of the concept of state consolidation, the Author of the dissertation attempted to independently provide a comprehensive definition of what state consolidation is (p. 17).

The Author rightly referred to the consideration of the issue of state consolidation in international relations, taking into account the theoretical context of the dissertation. The analysis on state consolidation and its structure was explained by the Author in a clear and logical manner. The Author's considerations are enriched with numerous charts and tables, which organizes and generalizes the presented opinions. The analysis of existing concepts of state consolidation and its components in the social sciences, presented in the first chapter, provides a solid conceptual foundation for the proper interpretation of the consolidation of independent Ukraine.

The second chapter of the dissertation *Civic consolidation in Ukraine* is a logical continuation of the Author's research inquiries. The Author's consideration of the issue of Ukraine's ethnic composition is one of the important elements of consideration in the context of state consolidation. In the dissertation, the Author rightly cited extensive statistical data on the ethnic composition of Ukraine as of 1989, as a union republic, but lacked the comment that Soviet-era statistics should be treated with caution. Massive manipulation of data by the Soviet authorities and the inability to verify pre-1991 statistics can noticeably blur the real state, especially when it comes to representatives of national and ethnic minorities. It should be noted that the Author included a brief explanation of the indicated problem in a footnote referring to the situation of the Crimean Tatars (p. 51).

Although there are a variety of methodologies depicting the size of the population in Ukraine, it is impossible to avoid a number of research doubts when dealing only with data from the last (and only in sovereign Ukraine) census, which was conducted in 2001. The Author of the reviewed dissertation cited important data on the number of citizens speaking their native language (not always Ukrainian); referred to the issue of religious diversity and pointed out the relationship between religion and political preferences. The reviewer realizes that it is a serious challenge for a researcher to attempt to use commonly available data illustrating the above issues. The Author was also able to objectively present the existing opinions in the Ukrainian scientific discourse regarding the formation of the ethno-political

and political nation model (p. 61). The Author recognizes that "[...] the Ukrainian political nation takes precedence over the ethnic nation. Ukraine is a mono-ethnic state; however, the Ukrainian ethnic group dominates the Ukrainian political nation" (p. 66).

In the course of his reflections on social consolidation in Ukraine, the Doctoral Student cited a detailed compilation of political myths functioning in society, including the symbolism behind the myth, the reasons for the myth's creation, the first recipients of the myths and the audiences to whom the myths were addressed (pp. 81-83). Such a compilation certainly enriches the dissertation, as well as facilitates the understanding of complex issues for viewers who are not experts on Ukrainian affairs. The Author rightly notes that the presented political myths have a consolidating or deconsolidating character, and in no case can they be attributed to universal characteristics. The analysis presented also emphasizes attention to the destructive nature of the political myths that have been implemented into Ukrainian society by Russian propaganda. The cited assessment of Russian external interference in Ukrainian society can also be treated in the context of threats to the security of any European state. This aspect can be a separate important and timely research topic.

The Author presents an interesting opinion on the instrumentality conducive to the consolidation of society. The dissertation presents a legal-political analysis of government documents aimed at creating a legal basis in the creation of a patriotic model for upbringing of citizens, with particular emphasis on the upbringing of the younger generation.

In the third chapter of the dissertation on the territorial consolidation of Ukraine, the Author drew attention to the territory that was formed after the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1991. The chapter is partly descriptive in nature, and also contains elements of legal and political analysis. The chapter cites a list of bilateral agreements on good neighbourhood with countries directly bordering Ukraine. The Author also pointed out the genesis of the formation of the various regions of the state and their ethnographic peculiarities. The Author distinguished three leading categories of instruments of territorial consolidation indicating them as political, military and civil categories. The dissertation outlines the process of local government reform in Ukraine¹ and points out the importance of state decentralization as an

¹ On this topic see: V. Zheltovskyy, *Self-governance in Ukraine: origin, evolution and perspectives*, Published by Akademia Humanistyczna im. Aleksandra Gieysztor, Pułtusk 2019.

important element of democratization. The chapter addresses threats to the state and its territorial consolidation due to Russian aggression and occupation of parts of Ukraine in 2014. The Author presented the changes in central and territorial governance under the conditions of ongoing Russian aggression and the imposed martial law. In the final part of chapter three, the Author presents recommendations for Ukraine's central government to "strengthen Ukraine's territorial and political consolidation" (p. 127), which seem to be too general.

In the fourth chapter devoted to the role of elites in the consolidation of power in Ukraine, the Author presented a brief genesis of Ukrainian statehood, constructed on the basis of numerous works by prominent Ukrainian historians. The aspect indicated is essential for a more profound understanding of the contemporary political processes taking place in Ukraine. In the above context, it is worth noting that an objective and free of Russian falsifications account of historical events in Ukraine is still insufficient, especially among Western European scholars. Russian aggression against Ukraine is forcing foreign researchers to more thoroughly verify Russian opinions on Ukraine that have existed for decades, the presence of works by Ukrainian researchers in the scientific discourse is noticeably increasing². It can be assumed that the dissertation authored by Mr. V. Myroniuk will also make a noticeable contribution to increasing the presence of Ukrainian researchers in the European discourse on Ukrainian issues.

The Author presented an extensive theoretical context on the role of elites in society, which illustrates a number of universal characteristics inherent in political elites, regardless of their national affiliation. The dissertation attempts a synthetic analysis of the peculiarities of the formation of the party system in Ukraine after obtaining state sovereignty³. The Author took into account the noticeable changes in Ukraine's political field after the Russian aggression in 2014 that continues to this day. The chapter pays attention to the existing

² On this topic see: S. Plokhly, *The Gates of Europe: a history of Ukraine*, Published by Basic Book, New-York 2015.; J. Hrycak, *Ukraina. Wyrwać się z przeszłości*, przekład: K. Kotyńska, J. Majewska – Grabowska, wyd. MCK, Kraków 2023.

³ On this topic see: W. Baluk, *Kształtowanie systemu partyjnego Ukrainy w okresie transformacji ustrojowej (1987 - 2004)*, Wrocław 2006; P. Pietnoczka, *Partie polityczne w niepodległej Ukrainie 1991-2007*, Olsztyn 2014; P. Pietnoczka, *Ukraińskie partie polityczne wobec polityki zagranicznej (1991-2019)*, Wyd. naukowe FNCE 2023.

dissonance between the public and representatives of political parties, the low level of trust towards political elites. The Author presents his diagnosis of the existing state of affairs and suggests what actions can increase the level of trust towards the political elite, which is absolutely correct, but it also seems worth considering the issues of political education in society.

In the fifth and final chapter of the dissertation, the Author focused his attention on assessing the consolidation of Ukraine, relying on numerous sociological studies made available by well-known American, European and Ukrainian think-tanks. **The PhD Student presented an assessment of the quality of democracy in Ukraine in comparison with countries such as Poland, Latvia and Russia. This part of the work lacked a convincing justification of why the Author made such a choice. Could the Author address this issue during the dissertation defense ?**

The fifth chapter gives the impression of being too laconic, and some of the Author's deductions may seem superficial (p. 187). The theoretical assumptions and illustrations regarding the level of consolidation of the Ukrainian state presented by the Author in this dissertation will need to be verified after the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Certainly, a valuable and interesting element of the dissertation could be surveys or interviews conducted on a group of representatives of authorities of various levels and activists of NGO's, as representatives of the active part of society. However, taking into account the emergency situation (epidemic and ongoing war), the Author did not succeed in realizing these intentions, as he states in the conclusions of the dissertation. One can only wish the Author to be able to realize such research in the near future and confront it with the present theoretical assumptions and opinions.

The Author points out a number of shortcomings, standing in the way of the complete consolidation of the Ukrainian state, the question arises: is there a chance for a balanced consolidation of the state and will there be any determinant of the finalization of this process? Is there a model state where the consolidation processes are complete or is it, however, an ongoing process?

Characteristics of the source base and literature on the subject

The dissertation was prepared basing on an impressive selection of source materials - laws, regulations, conventions. The Author also included a wide selection of literature on the subject - monographs, scientific articles, analyses, reports, information materials in several languages. An indisputable advantage of the dissertation is the Author's skillful use and proper interpretation of numerous documents in Ukrainian.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be said that the dissertation by Vladyslav Myroniuk makes an important contribution to the study of international relations. The Author presented an original point of view on the issue of consolidation of Ukraine, together with this he brought researchers closer to the state of Ukrainian scientific discourse on the issue raised. The PhD dissertation has great cognitive value and familiarizes readers with the specifics of building Ukrainian sovereignty after liberation from Soviet domination. The reviewed dissertation proves that the PhD Student has extensive interdisciplinary knowledge related to the theory of international relations, as well as history, law and sociology. The Author skillfully used a huge amount of knowledge and accurately formulated his own arguments.

It should also be noted that the reviewed dissertation has been prepared carefully and is correct in terms of style and technical/editorial aspects. Footnotes, bibliography, numerous tables and charts are prepared correctly.

I confidently conclude that the reviewed dissertation is an original solution to a scientific problem, the author has theoretical knowledge in the field of international relations, and has the knowledge and skills to continue his scientific work. I recommend that the dissertation be prepared for publication as a monograph.

The peer-reviewed dissertation meets the statutory requirements for obtaining a doctoral degree and may be approved for public defense.

L. Leshchenko