

Name of the student:	Tatev Derzyan
Title of the thesis:	The Effectiveness of Erasmus+ and UGRAD Soft Power on Armenia during Hard Times (Nagorno-Karabakh War 2020)
Reviewer:	Maciej Stępką

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

Thesis focuses on an important and interesting topic of academic exchange programmes (Erasmus+ and UGRAD) and their impact on Armenian exchange studies in the context of soft power. It analyses the formation of perceptions about the countries hosting exchange students in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh second war. In the introduction the Author clearly and aptly states the rationale behind this type of thesis. The three research questions proposed in the introduction are well suited to this type of inquiry. Hypotheses are verifiable and clearly formed.

The literature review section is very well written. It builds not only on classical text devoted to soft power theory but also on wide array of resources, which stem from institutionalism, public diplomacy and even psychology. The Author included an overview of literature on exchange programs in the EU and the US and their influence on broadly understood international relations. A big plus is that the Author engages with the literature and operationalizes the theories and theoretical approaches.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The research used in the thesis as well as the outlined methodology are clearly stated and suitable for this type of study. The thesis relies primarily on semi-structured interviews (39 in total) conducted via Zoom. 23 interviews were conducted with participants of Erasmus+ programme and 16 with UGRAD students. 39 interviews are satisfactory for this type of study (and for an MA thesis). My concern is that due to snowballing the Author had very limited control over the sample. There is a reference to diversification of sample, but how did it exactly occur? Also, it would be beneficial to see at least distribution of male and female students in the sample. Further, the thesis suitably applies qualitative content analysis to analyse collected data from semi-structured interviews. It also focuses on analysis of secondary textual sources, mainly strategic documents related to exchange programs. I appreciate the clear outline of the limitations of the study and rationalisation of questionnaire.

The structure of the analysis reflects the material used in the thesis. Firstly, the analysis focuses on the documents and then moves to primary data collected via interviews. The same approach is applied in relation to the Erasmus+ as well as UGRAD. The analysis sections are very well structured and clearly written. They connect directly to the hypotheses and rely on selected theories. The Author properly uses the material in her discussion feeding on rich material from the interviews, which I specifically appreciate.

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

The Author has delivered in a convincing and logical manner. The conclusions clearly link data hypotheses and research objectives. The Author presents a valuable insight, building on the collected data and most prominently the interviews.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

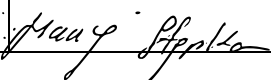
(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

The thesis is written in a grammatically correct manner. It adheres to academic standards. Citation style is coherent and layout is clear.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

It is a very good and original thesis. The Author has delivered a well-structured and well written analysis, feeding on a wide array of data (both primary and secondary). In my view it s interesting contribution to IR, soft power theory as well as general discussion on exchange programmes and their role in public diplomacy. I can only encourage further inquiries into this topic.

Grade (A-F):	A
Date:	Signature:
14.09.2021	

classification scheme

Percentile	Prague		Krakow		Leiden		Barcelona	
	91-100 %	8,5%	5	6,7%	8,5-10	5,3%	9-10	5,5 %
B (81-90)	81-90 %	16,3%	4,5	11,7%	7,5-8,4	16,4%	8-8,9	11,0 %
C (71-80)	71-80 %	16,3%	4	20%	6,5-7,4	36,2%	7-7,9	18,4 %
D (61-70)	61-70 %	24%	3,5	28,3%			6-6,9	35,2 %
E (51-60)	51-60 %	34,9%	3	33,4 %	6-6,4	42,1 %	5-5,9	30,1 %

Assessment criteria:

Excellent (A): 'Outstanding performance with only minor errors';

Very good (B): 'Above the average standard but with some errors';

Good (C): 'Generally sound work but with a number of notable errors';

Satisfactory (D): 'Fair but with significant shortcomings';

Sufficient (E): 'Performance meets the minimum criteria';

Fail: 'Some/considerable more work required before the credit can be awarded'.