

Name of the student:	Greta Scott
Title of the thesis:	Democratic Backsliding and Parliament: An Analysis of the Polish Sejm
Reviewer:	Dr Lala Muradova, UPF

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

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

One of the major crises facing contemporary democracies is democratic backsliding, which involves the process of declining democratic qualities and norms of the political system. Understanding the phenomenon in order to come up with strategies for overcoming it is thus more pertinent than ever. In her thesis, Greta asks whether, and if so, the extent to which a parliament plays a role in these processes. In doing so, Greta's thesis addresses a question of great scientific, policy and practical importance.

Having explicitly justified the importance of the posed research question, Greta embarks upon the systematic and thorough overview of the extant literature, clearly defining her main concepts and identifying relevant theoretical arguments, empirical findings and gaps in the existing literature.

Her literature review is coherent yet succinct and shows the breadth and depth of her familiarity with the literature. Furthermore, her hypotheses flow nicely from her literature review and makes it easy to read and understand the objectives of the thesis.

2. ANALYSIS

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

Greta uses the Polish case to study her research question and examine her hypotheses. Justifying a choice of a country case is a challenging task for students and academics alike, which Greta carries out with greater mastery. She first takes us on a tour through the history of Polish democracy, in order to provide the relevant historical context for the contemporary regression of democratic norms in the country. Further, she focuses on the role of the Polish Sejm in being the central political institution experiencing and contributing to democratic backsliding.

The methodology section of the thesis is very well-done: it aligns well with the objectives of the project, and clearly explains the rationale and assumptions underpinning the methodology, the analysis of the formal and informal practices of the Parliament with the data from three pivotal years in the Polish parliamentary history – 2013, 2017, 2021.

The clear and convincing explanations of two main measures for capturing the formal and informal powers of the parliament – Weighted Legislative Powers and Discourse Quality Index – provide the researchers with excellent opportunity to understand and/or replicate her coding for other studies; thus increases the legitimacy, and validity of her analysis, and contributes to more ethical research in the field.

Another praiseworthy element of Greta's research is her open discussion of the existing and potential shortcomings of her proxies – that try to capture the concepts she was trying to measure and study. The limitations of the analysis – provides the reader with the opportunity to scrutinize her analysis with a critical eye.

Her analyses are clear and of high quality and; her conclusion section links her findings with the past research, discusses the shortcomings and makes recommendations for future research.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

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

Greta's thesis is an excellent piece of work that needs to be converted to an academic article and published in a high-impact political science journal. I believe her findings will contribute to our understanding of the processes underpinning democratic backsliding.

### 4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

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


The thesis is very well-written, coherent and succinct. The theory section shows the student's excellent awareness of the literature and full understanding of academic conventions when it comes to writing excellent academic paper.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

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

In addition to the above-mentioned praise with regards to the substantive and structural aspects of the thesis, I would like to emphasize Greta's openness, willingness and ability (throughout the process) to incorporate my critical feedback and suggestions to her written work. At each stage of the process she has showed her commitment to learn and improve her project in a responsible and conscientious manner.

It has been an absolute pleasure to supervise Greta's master thesis. I believe Greta will become an excellent academic, should she wish to do so.

Grade (A-F)	A  98
Date:	Signature  
DD/MM/AAAA	25/06/2023

## 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'.

