

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE**  
**Faculty of Social Sciences**  
**Institute of International Studies**

**PROTOCOL ON DIPLOMA THESIS ASSESSMENT**  
**(Supervisor)**

Name of the student: Patrik Salát

Title: **Seeking Reconciliation between Georgia and Abkhazia: The Bottom-up Approach since 2008**

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Adrian Brisku (IMS)

**1. TOPIC AND OBJECTIVE (short information on the thesis, research objective):**

This thesis examines the process of reconciliation – from a bottom-up perspective (meaning non-state actors) – between Georgia and Abkhazia since the Georgian-Russian war of 2008, when top-down interactions between the Georgian government and Sokhumi had come to an end. Patrik successfully deploys three methodological approaches: Kaufman’s symbolic political theory (myth-symbolic complex), critical discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews to assess his research question on the extent to which the bottom-up reconciliation through peace-building projects (activities of peace activists [NGOs, academics]) have been able to transform the competing narratives on both sides and ultimately led to the reconciliation in both sides. The thesis convincingly argues that while bottom up-reconciliation activities have proven important in maintaining the ‘negative peace’ between the two sides, their potential to transform the top-down narratives – still caught in the myth-symbolic complex – and forge peace, remains extremely limited.

**2. CONTENT (complexity, original approach, argument, structure, theoretical and methodological backing, work with sources, appropriateness of annexes etc.):**

The thesis is complex in terms of engaging successfully with the methodological and theoretical vicissitudes in the field of reconciliation, peacebuilding and conflict transformation and clearly understanding the historical and political contexts of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. The approach taken by Patrik of contrasting, through a close, critical discourse analysis, of top-down narratives in the Georgian prime minister’s speeches and statements, and of bottom-up perspective of peace activists (in their interviews), is refreshing. The thesis advances a clear and convincing argument construed upon a clear and logical structure; theoretically and methodologically informed throughout. Patrik does work well with secondary and primary sources (documents and interviews), especially with the 15 semi-structured interviews, eliciting important insights while also showing sensitivity to some of the interviewees who did not want to fully identify (because of feeling insecure) themselves. Patrik, as appropriately displayed in the annexes with some of the transcripts of the interviews, has referenced those who did not want to disclose their identity only by their initials.

**3. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE (quality of language, citation style, graphics, formal aspects etc.):**

The quality of language and citation style are appropriate.

**4. STATEMENT ON THE ORIGINALITY OF THE THESIS**

The thesis was checked by the Turnitin anti-plagiarism software. It shows 25% overall similarity. Therefore, there is no plagiarism.

**5. SHORT COMMENTS BY THE REVIEWER (overall impression, strengths and weaknesses, originality of ideas, achievement of the research objective etc.):**

This work is original in terms of the approach of scrutinizing and contrasting both the top-down and bottom-up narratives and discourses and providing a refreshing update to the state of the art on bottom-up reconciliation efforts in post-2008 war Georgia. There are no discernible weaknesses to the thesis except for the main one, which Patrik has acknowledged, of not been able to conduct interviews with peace activists from the Abkhazian side because of the impossibility of getting access. Patrik has managed to write a very good thesis and I would suggest that he could think of publishing the main analysis and findings in a condensed form as an article for a Czech newspaper or if considering pursuing doctoral studies to submit it as an article for a peer-reviewed journal.

**6. COOPERATION WITH THE SUPERVISOR (communication with the supervisor, ability to reflect comments, shift from the original intention, etc.)**

The cooperation with Patrik was very good! He had great curiosity on the subject matter, read and researched extensively, reflected on my comments and was consistent and punctual with the delivery of drafts and chapters.

**7. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED DURING THE DEFENCE:**

1. You write that with the coming to power of the Georgian Dream coalition government in 2012, the State Ministry for Reintegration was renamed as the State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, which from a Kaufman's symbolic political theory reading could be viewed as altering the narrative and strategy of the Georgian state vis-à-vis Abkhazia and thus conducive to bringing in the Abkhazian side. However, the Abkhazian side saw reintegration and reconciliation as synonymous, therefore did not budge. How would Kaufman explain failure from the Georgian side?
2. You write that among your interviewees from the middle-range leaders, only one and in the condition of anonymity, accepted the trade-off of giving up territorial integrity for peaceful co-existence. Would you say that had more interviewees responded more on the condition of anonymity, more would have accepted this trade-off?

**8. RECOMMENDATION AND SUGGESTED GRADE:**

**A**

Date: 9 January 2023

Signature: