

Speech for the 2016 Arenberg-Coimbra Group Prize

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Dear Duke of Arenberg,

Dear Rectors and Members of the Executive Board,

Dear representatives from the Coimbra Universities,

It is a genuine honour to be nominated for the 2016 Arenberg-Coimbra Group Prize.

When I first entered university in Taiwan, my professor said, "University is the shrine of knowledge". Though we were just starting to recognise Cyrillic letters one by one, which seemed very distant from the so-called knowledge. Little by little, from letters to reading *War and Peace* in Russian, the essence of knowledge reveals itself: knowledge is the joy of discovery. University is where discovery multiplied with joy.

European universities are blessed with the proximity with one another and hence the abundant opportunities of cooperation and interactions. My master programme, the Erasmus Mundus Master of Arts Euroculture brought me first to Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, where unrestricted discussions liberate thoughts and ideas. Later in Uppsala universitet, abundant archives render the foundation of innovative breakthroughs. Throughout the access to different languages and the pursuit of enlightenment, acknowledging the differences between conceptions, prescriptions and the differences of the two is highlighted.

Thus, I decided to analyse the foreign policies of the European Union and the Russian Federation, their conceptions, prescriptions and the differences between the both. It is more than an obligation, but an accumulation of multicultural experiences. It is an absolute pleasure to receive the 2016 Arenberg-Coimbra Group Prize. It is an illuminous encouragement for me, and a grand finale for my master studies.

Finally, I would like to thank the Duke of Arenberg, the Executive Board, the Coimbra Group, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen and Uppsala universitet, my master programme the Erasmus Mundus Master of Arts Euroculture, Director Knudsen and Ms von Richthofen from Göttingen.

Thank you!

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The Erasmus exchange is a beneficial opportunity immersing in different cultures, and the diversity is further multiplied when a foreign student having the Erasmus exchange while obtaining a master degree abroad. Originated from Taiwan, I majored in Slavic Languages and Literatures, along with Diplomacy. In order to advance my Russian, I studied in Saint Petersburg for a year. In Taipei, I floated between the worlds of poetry and treaty; in Saint Petersburg, between aesthetical perfections and practical premeditations. Advanced academic knowledge was pursued in the Erasmus Mundus Master of Arts – Euroculture, which focuses on European politics, and embodies the integration throughout mandatory exchange semesters. I commenced studies in Göttingen, where essences of education are demonstrated through elaborate discussions with contrasting ideologies. “Culture Theories”, “Political Reconstruction of Europe”, “Othering in Literatures”, “Introduction to Euroculture”, and German classes lay foundations for my upcoming semester in the north.

In Uppsala, spirits of wisdom are transmitted through independent reflections. Living in the oldest Scandinavian university town permeates not only scents of ancient archives, but also atmosphere of creativity and vitality. Libraries of Uppsala are the Elysium for knowledge seekers, and every visit is an Enlightenment. “Social Science Methodology” enabled systemisations of knowledge, and discourse analysis became the methodology applied in my master thesis. The renowned peace and conflicts studies ignited my interests in investigating plausible origins of international conflicts, which is also a main theme in the thesis. “The Baltic Region” unravelled an integration conundrum. “Eurocompetence II: Project Management” allowed us presenting our proposals at the EU Delegation in Stockholm. My inherent appetite for learning languages was well indulged by Swedish, after Mandarin, English, French, German, Russian, and Polish.

Combing previous studies, I consecrated the master thesis to foreign policies of the EU and the Russian Federation. My multicultural experiences are constant battles of reinventing conceptions and prescriptions, and hence inspire my approach of how to research potential conflicts in foreign policies.

"Hostilities in Eyes of the Beholders? Foreign Policies of the European Union and the Russian Federation 2009 to 2014"

This master thesis applies the framework of role theory on foreign policies of the European Union and the Russian Federation with discourse analysis as methodology. The research question is what are the conceptions and prescriptions between the European Union and the Russian Federation in foreign policies from 2009 to 2014. By examining the differences in the mutual relationships, I argue that the discrepancy of their conceptions and prescriptions is one of the origins of conflicts.

Foreign policies are extensions of domestic interests, and embody the mind – sets of the states and how they intend to encounter their counterparts. It is more than "know thyself", but "know thyself, and know the others". Hence, observing foreign policies brings out not only the conceptions of the states, but also their prescriptions and furthermore, responding strategies on fellow states. The establishment of prescriptions on other polities can be associated with geopolitical positions, historical contexts, economical interests, religions, value – esteems and sometimes prejudices. The prescriptions on other states combine various factors, and vary in eyes of different beholders. Conceptions of states are potentially incoherent with their prescriptions from the perspectives of others. Conflicts may occur when conceptions of states are at variance with their prescriptions in the eyes of the others. Thus, this misperception may play a part in generating biased and ineffective strategies. It is less likely to conduct adequate foreign policies, when states do not perceive accurately what they are encountering. Hence, it is vital to recognise the plausible discrepancies between conceptions and prescriptions. The focus of analysis allocates on role conception – the ego's point of view, role prescription – the alter's perspectives and role performances.

The EU's conceptions can be concluded as "the universal values defender", "an economic moderator" and "an allies seeker". Its prescriptions from the Russian perspective are "the distant neighbour", "the main client" and "an international partner". The Russian conceptions are "a mighty power", "a resourceful economic player" and "a security defender"; its prescriptions from the EU are "the norms breaker", "an economic power" and "a security instability".

There are certain essential interests that Russia prefers to preserve, including access to navy ports. Despite of the vastness of Russian territory, its access to non – frozen harbours is rather limited, and hence the search for it has been a theme of its territorial expansion in the history, including Saint Petersburg and Vladivostok, whose name in Russian literally means to rule the East.

The EU's devotion towards defending universal values is evident, and adherence to this normative standard is used to position states on the spectrum of evaluation. The EU considers Russia in a position of constantly violating universal normative values, whereas Russia has been reiterated overly that it has the respect and willingness to abide by these regulations. However, the EU is not convinced by its actual records. Russia deems itself as a resourceful and powerful state, and its power should be accompanied by respect. The EU undoubtedly admits the sovereignty of the Russian Federation, but perhaps has underestimated the Russian mind – set.

On external affairs, the EU and Russia have better opportunities to reach consensus, when the affair locates far ashore, instead of in the near neighbourhood. The both polities agree on that the UN as a common platform for conflict resolutions. Nonetheless Russia values the UN even more, where its veto power in the Security Council appears to be an essential element. Conflicts are to occur, when one party expands and the other one considers itself as threatened or violated.

On economic sector, both Russia and the EU have comparatively constructive cooperation, though the EU's attempt of integrating Russia into international system by the WTO membership does not seem to be effective at its maximum. The EU is a supranational polity with commitments towards defending universal values and the biggest trading bloc in the world. Russia is enormous with abundant resources, proud of its cultural heritage, and along with its permanent seat in the Security Council. It demands corresponding respect, though it does aware of its necessity of modernisation of several sectors, and seek for international assistances.

"Know thyself" is fundamental, but "know thyself, and know the others" completes the whole vision. The discrepancies of their conceptions and prescriptions render conflicts. Though common borders and history were shared

by the European Union and the Russian Federation, cooperation cannot be achieved without efforts. It is fundamental that both the polities can address each other in an equal manner, and acknowledge the fact of the delicate cultural differences. Under this circumstance, constructing the mutual beneficial cooperation is hence plausible.

Policies

The thesis represents more than a designated obligation of a master degree, but an accumulated consequent of multicultural experiences. It has also undergone an odyssey throughout its composition, originated in Uppsala, developed in Strasbourg, where I had a research semester, and concluded in Göttingen. My language abilities were put into fine use by translating and transliterating Russian literatures into English, along with reviewing literatures in different languages. Foreign policies are strategies at national level, but acquired lessons can also be deployed at individual level.

There are two elements worth noticing: to understand and to be understood. Accelerating international contacts exacerbate understandings as much as misunderstandings. Drawing from personal experiences, learning foreign languages is highly recommended without reservations. Languages are embodiments of cultures, and thus acquiring linguistic abilities provides insights of cultural diversities. Furthermore, in order to tackle the almost unavoidable discrepancies of conceptions and prescriptions, it is essential to comprehend one another without prerequisite prejudices.

My Erasmus exchange in Uppsala not only inspires the constitution of the master thesis, but also reveals as an epitome of enchanting intellectual pursuits. I believe that these pursuits may benefit human kinds by enacting opportune corresponding strategies, and henceforth will devote myself to further enlightenments.