

This thesis represents a great deal of work by a very talented and intelligent scholar. I find it remarkable that, considering all of the other activities in which Sara has been involved this year, Sara was able to construct such a well written and energetic thesis. I am very favorably impressed by her ability to have incorporated and polished so much work in so little time. I have not the slightest doubt in my mind that Sara will have an extremely successful career.

*Writing style.* Sara writes with energy and with a clarity that is very impressive in an undergraduate thesis. Although she does have the tendency to use somewhat inflated rhetoric, I see this as part of her zest. I think that in an academic context she would do well to write more cautiously and carefully. I believe that the more experience she has in writing the more apparent this will be to her. She nevertheless has all of the talents necessary to be a good and effective writer.

*Research.* The thesis is diminished by a lack of probative study of the literature. Although I see the thesis as being an impressive performance, it would have been improved by a more diligent and early study of the sources. It reads as if the sources were quickly skimmed to find a citation to add to the thesis rather than studied and analyzed. Given her relative lack of familiarity with Soviet and Russian law and

modern Russian politics, more care should have been given to studying the contextual background. The thesis reads more like a skillful piece of journalism that was cleverly put together rather than a scholarly analysis of a very complicated issue.

*Thesis.* As I have discussed with Sara over the last year, I have some doubts about her larger argument. I certainly agree with her that modern Russia is not a "liberal" state -- though I do not know of anyone who thinks that it is. I also know of no one who imagined that Russia would become a liberal state within five to ten years after the fall of the Soviet Union. The real debate is not whether Russia *is* liberal, but whether Russia, given its history, will become a liberal state or whether it will revert to an authoritarian/totalitarian state. The prognosis is not good. I think that Sara, following the suggestion of Fareed Zakaria, is quite correct in saying that democratization in Russia does not mean liberalization. Of all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Russia's Constitution is the sole constitution that itself cannot be described as "liberal," given the tremendous and essentially unchecked power given to its President. (Some states, perhaps most notably Belarus and Slovakia -- and Bulgaria until the elections last year -- are *de facto* neither liberal nor democratic.)

I agree with Sara that there is a significant disparity between Russia's statutory regime that ostensibly governs media policy and its *de facto* media policy. Although Russia is a somewhat more extreme case than others in Central and Eastern Europe, it principally differs only in degree from most countries in the world where the government has a far more significant effect on media policy than it does in the US. To my mind, this should be the starting point of the analysis rather than the conclusion. The types of questions that I believe make sense to ask are: (a) what is the prognosis?, (b) is there anything within Russian society that will essentially prevent media liberalization?, or (c) might not *information technology itself* be the ultimate revolutionary in Russia? (Authoritarian governments have never tolerated -- nor survived -- the availability of alternative sources of information. With the coming of the Internet, cellular telephone communications, satellite communications, etc., governments will be less able to manipulate ideas. What will *that* do to Russia -- or China for that matter?)

*Overall.* This is a very impressive work by a very capable person. It would have profited from more focused and thoughtful research and reflection at the front end.