



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Bc. Ludmila Leškovská

Title: Development Aid and the Need for Exit Strategies: Case of the Czech Republic and Serbia

Programme/year: Security Studies, 2019

Author of Evaluation (supervisor): PhDr. Kateřina Werkman, MRes, Ph.D.

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	9
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	26
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	35
<i>Total</i>		80	70
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	4
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	19
TOTAL		100	89



Evaluation

Major criteria:

Ludmila Lešková has submitted a well-written, well-structured and precisely researched thesis. The topic is clearly laid out and justified, research questions well formulated and answered in the conclusion. Ludmila identified a missing piece in the existing literature on development aid, which predominantly deals with recommendations, suggested principles and policy papers on how the exit from a development programme should be executed while not paying enough attention to the actual motivations and practices of the donors themselves. Importantly therefore, her thesis has brought a real practice-oriented contribution to the field of development studies and international relations, also thanks to a rare combination of Ludmila's in-depth knowledge of the researched topic and her access to sources and persons involved in the Czech development community.

For her theoretical and methodological framework, the author has grounded her thesis in "positivistic development theory" (p.11), a choice that could have been more thoroughly discussed. A case study as a methodological framework suits the empirical nature of the research. The choice of Serbia as the case study of Czech development aid exit is well explained and put in the broader context of Czech foreign policy as a whole. The presented study is well contextualized within the existing literature. The author provides a very good overview of the history of development aid as a policy as well of the research that has been done on the phenomenon in the past decades.

In her discussion of the Czech development aid policy and past exit processes, Ludmila has come to several important and enriching findings that deserve to be highlighted:

Despite the existence of numerous manuals, recommendations and theories about what a donor's exit should look like or how it should be done, the Czech development aid exits from Serbia, Mongolia, and Kosovo did not follow any plan for an evaluation or monitoring of the exit process at all. Not only have these not been analysed or planned ahead of the exit, their implications were not reviewed even after the processes were finished in order to provide lessons learned *pro futuro*. Ludmila demonstrates and summarizes in her detailed case study how the exit process from Serbia has gone through different stages of development, what led to those stages and when and what were the breaking points. All this with no clear guidance from official documents, plans or even secondary sources because there were none, as she rightly points out. Her research identifies a visible pattern in the gradual realization of the exit and shows that in the end, it led to positive follow-up activities. Ludmila also offers a key explanation to this – the flexibility of the donor and his will. This is a precise characterization of many of (not only Czech) state policies and it is important that this research has brought the topic to light.



**FACULTY
OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**
Charles University

In the conclusion, Ludmila makes a strong case for practical implications of her research by offering lessons learned and guidance to avoid pitfalls that the non-transparent or at least not very well-planned process of exiting has created. First of all, the very existence of a plan with a timeline would provide a smoother decline of aid distribution. Then, the communication towards the public on both sides as well as between the decision makers themselves would be much easier and transparent. And very importantly, there could be a real and transparent evaluation done on whether the program and its exit were a success or not.

Minor criteria:

Rich and otherwise hardly accessible sources come as a major advantage of the presented paper. Ludmila enriches the existing literature by providing a perspective enabled by her personal involvement in the field she has researched. As an employee of the Czech Development Agency, she was directly involved with key actors on all sides and all levels of the decision-making process of exiting from the examined cases of countries. It allowed the research not only to get to unique sources, but also to “extract” information they may otherwise not be willing share. She does admit to a potential bias that her “insider” role may have for the research, but only in passing. I would have liked to see a more detailed reflection of the matter as it is a crucial point for this type of research.

Overall evaluation:

The presented thesis successfully meets all the criteria for an MA thesis, and has a rare added value in its orientation towards informing practical policy.

I suggest the following questions are addressed at the defense:

1. Can you cite some examples of foreign countries whose exit processes do not lack the shortcomings identified in the case of Czech Republic (no strategies, guidelines, no lessons learned)? And what difference does it make to the success of their exit processes?
2. Could you explain why, in your opinion, the Czech exit strategies are not being prepared and sought?

Suggested grade:

excellent to very good

Signature: