

## REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	The Relation Between the Military and Religion in the Political Regimes of Iran and Turkey
<b>Author of the thesis:</b>	Jifu Wei
<b>Referee (<i>incl. titles</i>):</b>	Dr Janusz Salamon

**Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the 5 numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).**

**1) Theoretical background:** Jifu Wei's attempt to explore the relationship between religion and the military in two prominent Muslim-majority states proved an ambitious undertaking, especially as he envisaged these two case-studies in comparative political analysis as examples of a more general question, whether the Islamic political tradition (in some broad sense of the term) implies a particular relationship between religious authorities and military authorities. As Jifu himself acknowledges, the main 'theoretical' framework within which he operates in order to identify the similarities and differences between the place occupied by religion and the military in the Iranian and Turkish political regimes is the historical account of the evolution of the role over religion and the military in the Turkish and Iranian republics. One might argue that both the analysis of the relation between religion and the state, and the analysis of the place of the military in the constitutional order of Iran and Turkey would greatly benefit from the employment of at least rudiments of the Theory of Church-State Relationship, as well as the Military Theory. By limiting oneself primarily to the account of the historical development of the institutions under analysis, one is bound to limit also the explanatory power of one's study.

**2) Contribution:** The main contribution of Jifu's work lies in the relative novelty of the very idea to compare and contrast the Iranian and the Turkish political regimes by focusing on just two crucially important aspects of those regimes. Jifu provided a convincing argument why comparing these two regimes was especially promising. As he points out, these are arguably the only two Muslim-majority countries in which something like a stable political system, capable of surviving many decades, has been developed and lends itself to a close scrutiny. Yet this very point which gave rise to Jifu's research project, proved, at the end, to be the main obstacle in formulating some generalisations which might be considered as interesting contributions. On one hand, the gradual but long-term developments in Erdogan's Turkey make generalisations regarding the place of religion and the military in the Turkish political regime difficult, because effectively one can talk about two different political regimes, with two different models of the place of religion and the military in the overall political system. One would need to attend to complexities of the general shift in the Turkish politics in the Erdogan in order to say something truly meaningful about long-term tendencies when it comes to the place of religion and the military in Turkey as an example of modernizing Muslim-majority state. Otherwise, one is left with the surface-picture of the sheer power-struggle in which, for example, the gradual subjugation of the Turkish army to the executive power is not explained in terms of the evolution of the constitutional framework, but as a result of the failed coup. Such 'historical' analysis of the developments on the ground was bound to lead the Author to the conclusion which, as I am sure, he will admit has a limited interest, namely that there does not seem to exist any general 'Islamic' constitutional theory that would define the proper model of the Church-State relationship and the place of the military. While the Iranian case appears to be (since the Islamic Revolution) a more stable one than the Turkish model of the secular republic, it is, firstly, not really based on any comprehensive constitutional theory, when it comes to the place of the military. But having made all the above comments, one begins to wonder, what was the point of bringing religion and the military together in one thesis project? Because these are two most powerful forces which shape politics in the Muslim-majority states, exemplified by Iran and Turkey? Of course, the military always place an important role in the power struggle in non-liberal states, but that is something that goes without saying, because the military tends to be an arm of the ruling elites. The case of the pre-Erdogan Turkey was interesting, precisely because the army played the role of an apolitical guardian of the secular constitution. So perhaps the main contribution of Jifu's thesis is that it shows that Turkey under Erdogan returned to 'normality' when it comes to the role played by the military in non-liberal states, whether Muslim-majority or not. At the same time, one might say that the changes that took place under Erdogan's watch made the role of the army more similar to that played by the army in Iran, which makes the comparison between the two less interesting. So what remains the key political

question for the future in the Muslim-majority state is the relationship between religion and politics. The place of the military will be a function of the developments in this other sphere.

**3) Methods:** The methodological aspect of the thesis is largely limited to comparison of the historical developments leading to the present state of affairs in Iran and Turkey.

**4) Literature:** Given what the Author is effectively doing in the thesis (analyzing the historical developments and the current state of affairs when it comes to the place of religion and the military in the Iranian and Turkish regimes) the literature is sufficient. However, in order to theorize these issues in greater depth, one would need to delve deeper into the intra-Muslim current debates about the Islamic political tradition, while on the other hand, take into account the Theory of the Church-State Relationship and the Military Theory.

**5) Manuscript form:** The stylistic infelicities abound, but the overall structure is orderly and the footnotes and bibliography acceptable.

**Box for the thesis supervisor only.** Please characterize the progress in the working out of thesis (e.g. steady and gradual versus discontinuous and abrupt) and the level (intensity) of communication/cooperation with the author:

Discontinuous; intensified at the last stage of cooperation.

**Suggested questions for the defence are:**

- 1) You conclude your thesis with a bold suggestion that the Muslim-majority countries like Iran and Turkey will fail in their attempt at the modernisation, unless a meaningful separation of religion and state will be achieved in these countries. So two questions come to mind: (a) how is this conclusion grounded in your overall analysis of the Iranian and Turkish regimes?; (b) what are your arguments in favour of this bold thesis?
- 2) Given that the current Iranian political regime is highly ideological at its roots, and certainly not lacking a vision of the place of religion in the political system of the Islamic Republic, what is the explanation of the role of the military in the Iranian Islamic regime (and why it is relatively „under-theorised“ in the context of the Islamic Republic)?

**I recommend** the thesis for final defence. I recommend the following grade: **“D”**.

**SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED** (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	12
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	11
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	12
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	16
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	10
<b>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)</b>	<b>D</b>

**DATE OF EVALUATION: 10.6.2020**

Janusz Salamon

**Referee Signature**

*Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:*

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Level of performance
91 – 100	<b>A</b>	= outstanding (high honour)
81 – 90	<b>B</b>	= superior (honour)
71 – 80	<b>C</b>	= good
61 – 70	<b>D</b>	= satisfactory
51 – 60	<b>E</b>	= low pass
50 – 0	<b>F</b>	= failure. Thesis is then not recommended for defence.