



## Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Cheng, Yi-Chen

Title: Asia-Pacific Rebalance: Evolutions of Taiwan's Foreign Policy Trajectory

Programme/year: MAIN/2020

Author of Evaluation (external assessor): Dr. Ondrej Ditarych

| Criteria              | Definition                                  | Maximum | Points    |
|-----------------------|---|---------|-----------|
| <b>Major Criteria</b> |   |         |           |
|                       | Research question, definition of objectives | 10      | <b>7</b>  |
|                       | Theoretical/conceptual framework            | 30      | <b>18</b> |
|                       | Methodology, analysis, argument             | 40      | <b>27</b> |
| <i>Total</i>          |   | 80      | <b>52</b> |
| <b>Minor Criteria</b> |   |         |           |
|                       | Sources                                     | 10      | <b>5</b>  |
|                       | Style                                       | 5       | <b>2</b>  |
|                       | Formal requirements                         | 5       | <b>2</b>  |
| <i>Total</i>          |   | 20      | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>          |   | 100     | <b>61</b> |



## Evaluation

### Major criteria:

The thesis' objective is to analyse Taiwan's foreign policy through the theoretical lens of neoclassical realist theory. It consists of introduction, a short literature review, chapters on theory and methodology, a descriptive chapter detailing the functioning of Taiwan's political systems, two empirical case studies, and the concluding chapter comparing the empirical analysis' results.

The literature review section leaves much to be desired, with an attempt to establish a typology of perspectives on Taiwan's foreign policy yet without listing a sufficient amount of resources in either category. Neoclassical realism is duly presented in the theoretical section – it is not clear, however, why Walt's, rather than Schweller's definition of bandwagoning is adopted, for example –, and independent, intervening and depending variables are rather clearly defined here.

The empirical sections are detailed in terms of tracing the independent variables, in particular the economic ones. However, the causal mechanism connecting their values to foreign policy outcomes (dependent variables) is neither clearly presented, nor sufficiently supported by empirical evidence. The author argues that the two successive administrations' strategies could be typologised as bandwagoning and balance of threats, a claim which *per se* is plausible yet not framed as, nor sustained, as a causal inference.

### Minor criteria:

The thesis presents, overall, a structured and coherent argument. However, the language at times is difficult to comprehend, even when it concerns definition of the research objectives (p. 19). Standard referencing is not maintained throughout the thesis, which moreover would have benefited from formal polishing, including proper division of the argument in paragraphs with topical sentences.



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**Overall evaluation:**

The thesis captures in detail a number of indicators relevant from the standpoint of neoclassical realist theory when attempting at tracing changes in Taiwan's foreign policy in the recent period. It succeeds in presenting a large amount of data and broadly anchoring it theoretically. It suffers, on the other hand, both from theoretical shortcomings and an unfulfilled potential in terms of connecting the independent and intervening with dependent variables.

**Suggested grade:** D/E

**Signature:**