1. Reviewer
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Manuscript title „The Geopolitical Determinants in India’s Central Asia Strategy“

Author: Hrishabh Sandilya

4. Opponent review

The objective of this thesis titled „The Geopolitical Determinants in India’s Central Asia Strategy“ is to uncover main determinants of India’s strategy in Central Asia. Mr. Sandilya is attempting to answer the following research question: „what are the determinants of India’s strategy in Central Asia and which factors are shaping it?“ Starting point of the thesis is an analysis is three existing determinants which are briefly explained and analyzed.

From the methodological point of view, the author applies qualitative case-study paradigm. He based his research on empirical data collected during expert interviews (with Indian and Central Asian elites and field research). Furthermore, he analyzed official Indian documents and narratives in order to explain factors shaping Indian strategy and foreign policy in this respective region. On the other side it seems to be a bit superfluous to explain the meaning, advantages or disadvantages of the case study as a method of research.

The theoretical background of the author is explained in the chapter 3, however it would be better to explain the theoretical basis already in the introduction. Mr. Sandylia has mainly based his research within the framework of renewed interpretation of Mackinder’s Heartland Theory with some aspects of critical geopolitics. This seems to be excellent starting point,
however additional literature review should also be contemplated in view that some key authors in the respective debates do not figure in the literature (recent works of R.D. Kaplan or J.S.Nye), which I am sure the author is aware of. Also he goes too far in explaining Mackinder’s geopolitical thinking, this part of the thesis gives the impression of textbook.

The thesis is structured into eight chapters including the introduction and conclusion. The structure makes it easy to establish a fluent reading as chapter come up in a clear order.

Overall literature research is a strong part of the thesis, the author has managed to collect impressive number of resources and data. However, the author goes too much in discussion of the secondary literature used in the thesis. It might be better to analyze the contribution of particular works within the main body of the thesis, at least it would allow more fluent reading of this part. The obvious advantage and the strong part of the thesis is author’s command of English.

The thesis satisfies all formal and academic standards required by the Faculty of Social Science, it also offers huge amount of maps, charts and tables. However, at least some of them should be listed in annexes and not in the main body of the thesis. All data provided make the thesis very informative, but on the other some data used in the thesis should be updated as they are a bit obsolete (e.g. Central Asian oil reserves (2011), Central Asian gas reserves (2010) or the size of India’s GDP (2011)).

To sum it up the text is not only easy to read, but also presents author’s own original conclusions based on his field-research and conducted interviews. Furthermore there is a lot of information presented in the thesis, which makes it clear that the author is clearly knowledgeable about the India’s foreign policy in Central Asian countries. The paper is solid enough and contributive to geopolitics, therefore I recommend it to be defended in its current form.