



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Alexandra Matjasch

Title: How Do Regional Powers Shape the Security Environment within their Regional Subcomplex? A Case Study of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (2020)

Programme/year: MAIN

Author of Evaluation: Dr. Ondrej Ditrych (Supervisor)

Criteria	Definition	Max.	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	7
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	25
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	29
<i>Total</i>		80	61
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	20
TOTAL		100	81



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis proposes to trace three regional powers (Russia, Turkey and Iran)'s influence in the South Caucasus by means of a qualitative case study of the Second Nagorno Karabakh War (2020). The subject is well framed, and both relevant and topical. The author demonstrates a solid grasp of many key theoretical concepts in security studies as well as the political and historical circumstances of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The thesis is competently written and it is noteworthy and commendable that the author is aware and transparent concerning also the limitations of her research.

While the thesis is clearly a result of deep and honest engagement with the subject matter, its deficit lies in a certain incoherence. It introduces a number of concepts at length (e.g. security dilemma) which are unnecessary for the analysis. It outlines key tenets of the regional security complex theory (RSCT), then advances directly to analysis based on the framework before returning again to theory and methodology, and conducting the analysis of the conflict as such. (While her presentation of RSCT is solid, it would have been worth noting that Buzan's original articulation in *People, States and Fear* and the latter one, in the edited volume with Waever, differ insofar as the second one is entangled in the securitization theory, whereas the first is more closely linked to Buzan's structural realism. The first empirical analysis is cogent, yet it could also include another faultlines in the relations of the regional powers under scrutiny, e.g. Libya in case of Russia and Turkey. The U.S., while not a centerpiece of the analysis, is conspicuously *altogether* absent from the picture when it comes to the South Caucasus, on the other hand.) The second empirical analysis is preceded by methodological discussion which outlines a hypothesis (regional powers exert influence) and proposes a causal mechanism (p. 54) which however is more of a thesis statement concerning their interests, or reasons *why* they do so. The hypothesis would have been really relevant only in case it were *falsified*, which it is not.



The discussion is followed by a concise and well executed overview of the conflict. (It may only be noted that the historical census should be taken with a grain of salt since we are dealing with one sedentary, and one seminomadic population. Moreover, to avoid a facile notion that the region is a place of ancient hatreds it is worth mentioning that in history there have been also long periods of peaceful and even prosperous cohabitation of the two ethnicities.) The second empirical analysis that follows successfully demonstrates the influence in the conflict of Russia and Turkey; less so, Iran, which the author concedes. It is debatable, however, to what extent the analysis, sound and insightful as it is, can be considered a process tracing. During the defence, I suggest that the author argues her point *vis-à-vis* an alternative view that Russia's intervention was rather reluctant, took place only in response to Turkey's assertive posture and the lack of restraint on part of Azerbaijan, and explains why she believes that Russia acquired "almost unrestricted power" (p. 72) as a result.

Minor criteria:

The structural deficit in the argument notwithstanding, the thesis is well and cogently written, and based on a fair amount of relevant secondary resources.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis, a certain incoherence notwithstanding, presents a solid and overall insightful if somewhat disorganised argument related to a topical subject which moreover is linked to broader issues in world politics (i.e., the role of regional revisionist powers).



FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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Suggested grade:

B/C

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anatoly D. J.', written over a horizontal line.