MASTER´S EXAMINER REPORT

GPS – Geopolitical Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Isolationism in IR
Name of Student:	Shota Mgeladze
Referee *(incl. titles)***:**	**Mgr. Branislav Mičko**
Report Due Date:	**06.09.2021**

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

1) Contribution and argument:
The author develops a very interesting and original topic, which I believe could make a significant contribution to this field of work. However, I find it has several problems that majorly hamper the achievement of his stated objective. Possibly the most important issue is the case selection and the subsequent theories testing. The author selected China (1372-1842), Japan (1633-1853), Great Britain (1875-1903), and the United States (1930-1941) as his cases. While the cases and the timespan reveal a very brave research design, their combination with the application of neorealism and neoclassical realism suggest very problematic application. The author completely glosses over the fact that China in 1372, and most likely also Japan in 1633, was not a part of any international system that would fit the requirements for the application of neo-realist or neo-classical realist framework. Both theories operate with a particular understanding of units as modern states that are based on Westphalian sovereignty. Author does not provide any explanation why these two cases could indeed fit the framework. The analysis of almost five centuries of Chinese isolationism is very shallow and not very persuasive – moreover, in the section on neo-classical realism it is even coupled into the same sub-chapter as Japan (also two centuries). A similar problem – one that even the author acknowledges – comes with the application of Liberalism. Author ignores the cases of Japan and Liberalism because "imperial China and Japan did not have a notion of civil society." Despite the fact that the analysis of interested group could have been provided. Overall, the research quality of the presented work is severely lacking, despite the very promising topic.

2) Theoretical and methodological framework:
Selected theories are relevant for the research question. The theoretical framework is sufficient. A However, with regard to methods, the operationalization is not done in an honest manner to include all selected cases (see liberalism comment above).

3) Sources and literature:
The literature more or less covers the traditional authors of the used traditions. On the other hand, the author uses second hand citations instead of going directly to the source material – for example, both Carr's and Locke's ideas are quoted from other authors instead of their books.

4) Manuscript form and structure:
No major issues with the structure of the thesis. However, there are significant irregularities with the citations in the bibliography. Some include only author names and websites (which tend not to work) and lack dates of citation of web pages. The addition of the chapter on Trump feels strange and a bit out of place in the work.

5) Quality of presentation
No major issues with the language. The titles of the sub-chapters could have been highlighted better.

CATEGORY	POINTS
Contribution (research quality, analysis, and conclusions) *(max. 40 points)*	20
Theoretical and methodological framework *(max. 25 points)*	18

Sources and literature	*(max. 10 points)*	8
Manuscript form and structure	*(max. 15 points)*	8
Quality of presentation (grammar, style, coherence)	*(max. 10 points)*	9
TOTAL POINTS	*(max. 100 points)*	**63**
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)		**D**

Suggested questions for the defence are:

Why is it possible to apply neorealist theories to the cases of medieval China and Japan?

How would you operationalize civil society in China and Japan in order to include them in the analysis?

I recommend the thesis for final defence.

_____

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	**A**	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	**B**	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	**C**	= good
61 – 70	**D**	= satisfactory
51 – 60	**E**	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	**F**	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.