

IEPS MASTER THESIS ADVISOR REVIEW FORM

STUDENT NAME: Aleksey Bozhko

THESIS TITLE: Analysis of the Natural Gas Market of Uzbekistan

ADVISOR NAME: Emil Souleimanov

ADVISOR GRADE: (1, 2, 3 or Fail)

REVIEW

(Please fill your critique in here in about 2 pages, regarding the suitability of the students work, the structure of the thesis, methodology, resources used and overall grade for the thesis)

The author has chosen a topic which is quite unknown in the Czech/Central European academic and expert circles. His work gets along the crossroads of economics with focus on energy studies, area studies and international relations/political science, as well, which also provides for the study's uniqueness. In this regard, in its complex multidisciplinary nature it overpasses Czech borders as is an interesting contribution to the ongoing discourse in the global context of Central Asian/Central Eurasian studies.

In the introductory part of his work, the author deals with his methodological approach - the chapter is quite short, but clear and contains some basic information. The work also encompasses a chapter in which a critical analysis of contemporary research on the topic is provided. The study uses a solid amount of both primary and secondary sources. I especially appreciate author's *fieldwork* that has contributed considerably to the overall quality of the study - the interviews he conducted with individuals involved in the process of corporative policy-making help shape the consequent portrait based on the reality *on the ground*, not on diverse speculations neither using authoritative accounts by other authors. Importantly, the work analyzes the reality in the making and for this

kind of practice-oriented research, this can be said to be the optimal option the use of which should be appreciated.

As for the structure as a whole, it is clear and makes sense in any respect as it closely observes and analyzes relevant issues (in the comparative Central Asian perspective) and leads to a solid conclusion. The work is equipped with useful tables and figures that contribute to a better understanding of the remote region and its peculiarities.

Introductory chapters dealing with some theoretical aspects (author's attempts at unveiling the concept of energy security and his explanation of some basic aspects of the neorealist approach) provide for a necessary platform for the research. However, at this place I think that a more detailed explanation of *why* exactly the neorealist approach was used for the purpose of the present work – in comparison to other approaches that exist in the field of IR/PS – would be an asset to the author's argument. In my opinion, author's unwillingness to explain the (ir)relevance of the theoretical background chosen by him for the main research (what are the implications of using this, not other theoretical approach in studying the matter?) can be said to be a relative weakness of the work. I have used the word relative, since on the other hand it is rather disputable to which extent this kind of practice-related work needs to have widely theorizing ramifications.

I also argue that notwithstanding the chapter's title (Defining "Energy Security") no definition *per se*, or at least an overview of the relevant discourse containing some available definitions, is provided in the chapter. Another *soft* criticism of mine pertains to quite short and rather superficial chapters on the Nabucco/Trans-Caspian pipeline projects which have been discussed broadly as a "non-Russian" alternative for exporting Central Asian strategic energy

resources to the EU markets. Interestingly, no single mention of the 2008 Russo-Georgian war in South Ossetia is made, even though this military conflict is said to have had quite serious implications on the attractiveness of the South Caucasus-related energy projects which is quite relevant for the Central Asia export potential in the making. Fortunately enough for the author, my criticism starts and ends right here given the high quality of the research in general.

The work is unbiased and well-balanced. It is in conformity with the genuine project of the thesis. Author's work with data is accurate. His argumentation is clear and comprehensible. The work is rich in specific factual detail and unveils author's first-hand familiarity with the region and topics concerned. Author's ability to formulate findings of his own is exceptional, as is his skill to tell a story and provide for a sharp analysis. The language and stylistic level of the study is high and meets formal expectations that an academic work of this sort should meet.

Notwithstanding some rather unsubstantial shortcomings scrutinized above, I suggest that the highest grade (A, 1) is given to the author for the work at the defense.

26th January, 2010, Prague.

Dr. Emil Souleimanov