

## REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

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

<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<b>The Balkans after 1991 through the prism of geopolitics</b>
<b>Author of the thesis:</b>	<b>SHAREVSKI, Mario.</b>
<b>Referee (incl. titles):</b>	<b>RNDr. Jan Kofroň, Ph.D.</b>

**Remark:** It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 500 words long. In case you will assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.

### **SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED** (for details, see below):

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	17
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	14
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	15
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	19
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	19
<b>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)</b>	<b>1</b>

You can even use a decimal point (e.g. giving the grade of 2.5 for 60 points).

### **Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the 5 numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).**

**1) Theoretical background:** There is whole chapter solely devoted to geopolitical theories and concepts. In addition, the thesis tries (if not without problems) to employ these theories in its explanatory framework. One problem is that while some theories are at least implicitly used in significant part of empirical chapters, some other theories are not truly employed. Thus, I dare to say that the interconnection of theoretical and empirical part of the thesis is not without some problems. Perhaps, it would be better to focus on just one (the most- promising) GP theory and then try to assess its ability to provide plausible explanatory framework for empirical events.

**2) Contribution:** The thesis provides detailed historical narrative guided by some geopolitical theories and concepts. Balkan is an intrinsically interesting region and employed theories represent the core theoretical tenet of the field. Thus the work provides an interesting contribution to debates on recent geopolitics of the region. Especially, it is interesting to see that almost all nations in the region work with the idea of greater nation (state). It follows that there is clear potential for competition over contested land. Nevertheless, I believe that the thesis could provide better (more focused) assessment of explanatory power of selected theories. It is possible to conclude that the piece reads as an interesting theoretically grounded historical narrative. The weaker aspect of the thesis is its rather implicit engagement with theories, which results in rather vague conclusion. It is not perfectly clear how individual theories fared when compared with evidence.

For example author says (p. 103): "the Balkans was the only place in Europe after the cold war and 1991 that experienced foreign intervention and air bombing campaign thus confirming the capabilities and successfulness of the geopolitics of air." Having in mind that the air campaign in 1999 took 78 days, and that there was on the one hand weak Serbia and on the other mighty USA with her Allies, one has to doubt whether "geopolitics of air" was really vindicated. BTW according to Posen (2000) Serbian army lost only 5-10 % of its heavy armament in Kosovo during the air campaign – hardly impressive score for air power. To sum it up more explicit engagement with theories would (probably) produce stronger and perhaps even more interesting results.

**3) Methods:** Author declares that he will use case and comparative method; however there are some caveats in its actual employment. I think, that the selection of cases should be better

explained. Especially, I would recommend more explicit connection between on the one hand theories and concepts as described in the first chapter and empirical cases on the other. The key question is: What can a case tell us about our theories? AND/OR: Is it possible to (a priori) expect that all theories will manifest their explanatory power in selected case, or not (and why)? Similarly, it should be explained in which aspects selected cases differs and in which they are similar. Careful explanation of case selection logic should follow (or accompany) the introduction. With such detailed explanation of case selection in hand, it would be easier (for author) to (i) integrate theoretical and empirical chapters and (ii) to provide more structured and critical assessment of explanatory power of employed theories and finally (iii) to possibly draw some broader theoretical lessons. May it be that author did not intent to test or rectify some theory, maybe he wanted to use a theory as framing device for his narrative – and it would be absolutely plausible goal. However, in that case he should use just one theory (or several well-integrated theories).

**4) Literature:** Thesis engages with wide range of solid scholarly literature. Further, author's sources include pieces written in several languages – something I have to highlight and the author deserve praise for this aspect of his work. Author's command and understanding of literature is excellent.

**5) Manuscript form:** Considering that the author is not a native speaker, it is a well written thesis. Author's style is fully appropriate. As far as we talk about general outline of the manuscript, it is logical and appropriately structured. When focusing on more pedestrian aspects, I would recommend to (i) use shorter sentences (when possible), and (ii) to structure the text into shorter paragraphs – it would make a reader more comfortable...

**DATE OF EVALUATION: 17.6.2014**

---

**Referee Signature**

**The referee should give comments to the following requirements:**

**1) THEORETICAL BACKGROUND:** Can you recognize that the thesis was guided by some **theoretical fundamentals** relevant for this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts omitted? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently incorporated with the topic and hypotheses tested?

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**2) CONTRIBUTION:** Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and relevant empirical material. Is there a distinct **value added** of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain **why** the observed phenomena occurred? Were the policy implications well founded?

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**3) METHODS:** Are the **hypotheses** for this study clearly stated, allowing their further verification and testing? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and **analytical tools** used in the thesis relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the aspiration level of the study? Is the thesis **topic comprehensively analyzed** and does the thesis not make trivial or irrelevant detours off the main body stated in the thesis proposal? More than 10 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**.

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**4) LITERATURE REVIEW:** The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way and disposes with a representative bibliography. (Remark: references to Wikipedia, websites and newspaper articles are a sign of **poor research**). If they dominate you cannot give more than 8 points. References to books published by prestigious publishers and articles in renowned journals give much better impression.

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**5) MANUSCRIPT FORM:** The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate language and style, including academic **format** for quotations, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking**.

Strong                      Average                      Weak  
20                              10                              0                      points

**Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:**

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Czech grading	US grading
81 – 100	<b>1</b>	= excellent	= A
61 – 80	<b>2</b>	= good	= B
51 – 60	<b>3</b>	= satisfactory	= C
41 – 50	<b>3</b>	= satisfactory	= D
0 – 40	<b>4</b>	= fail	= not recommended for defence