

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	IRAN AND THE UNITED STATES' RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NUCLEAR DEAL
Author of the thesis:	Alexane Saïd
Referee (<i>incl. titles</i>):	Doc. Ing. Vladimír Benáček, CSc.

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

1) CONTRIBUTION:

The thesis of Miss Saïd delved into the mechanism how the political relations between Iran and United States progressed from a strategic partnership (Shah Reza Pahlavi), to tactical tolerance (Irangate), up to a climax of strategic hostility (axis of evil) and back to present pragmatic tolerance (nuclear deal). The coverage of such a long-lasting scope of analysis was quite extensive, touching the changing internal political environment in both countries, their objectives and seeming cultural divergences. The author considers also the changing situation on the international scene (Iraq, Izrael, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Russia, Syria, Saudi Arabia, China, France, ...) where the US had their crucial strategic concerns, which allows to combine endogenous and exogenous factors into her analysis.

Taken from the view of political science, the thesis is a valuable and original contribution to the understanding how relations between Iran and US evolved in time.

2) Theoretical background:

Along with extensive descriptive sections there is a clear intention of the author to impose and answer the questions “Why” and “How” explaining the otherwise mysterious behavioural patterns especially on the side of Iran. That required bringing various theoretical concepts into the play.

Such was the concept of power that was proxied by the ability of Iran to develop and use the WMD (i.e. the weapons of mass destruction), plus the strategic involvement of energy (crude oil) on international markets and the reliance of “strategic culture” leading to international ideological alliance backed by religious fundamentalism.

The theoretical background could then vindicate why Iran endured many external pressures and could always perceive itself as a natural hegemon of its neighborhood and could become a political and economic match to such countries as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

3) Methods:

Miss Saïd brought to her support the methodological instruments of realism, as advocated by Morgenthau and Waltz, and contrasted it with the liberal framework, such as the Democratic Peace hypothesis of Owen. These two have been complemented later by the strategic culture field of study, as proposed by Johnson and particularly Mead. The interplay between these three methodological instruments was instrumental in interpreting the volatility in the relations between Iran and the US. It could even allow the author to speculate and predict the potential evolution of these relations on pp. 64-67, including the recent statements of D. Trump on Iran.

4) Literature:

Miss Saïd works in her thesis with over 80 titles, with a large number of purely theoretical papers among them. It must be appreciated how she managed to access many online sources and research papers dedicated exclusively to Iran and was able to explain their findings within her own theoretical framework. I could consider her coverage of literature as exceptional.

5) Manuscript form:

While my previous comments were generally highly positive due to readability and successful enhancement of methods with contents, here I must mention, as a negative feature, the too extensive length of this thesis. Its densely written 78 pages represent more than double the recommended requirements of FSV UK. Given the quality of this thesis, it could have been much shorter while still retaining the grade of “excellent”, which I am proposing. Otherwise the layout and the grammar of the text meet high standards.

Suggested question for the defence is: „**How could the present situation in the relations between the US on the one hand and Turkey, Saudi Arabia and China on the other hand be reflected on the US-Iran relationship? Could the US and Iran become allies and upon which conditions.**“

„**Do you think that Iran should retain its WMD deterrent, even if the relations to OECD countries become normalised?**“

I recommend the thesis for final defence. I recommend the following grade: “1” (excellent).

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

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	18
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	18
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	19
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	19
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	17
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)	91
The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)	1

You can use the decimal point (e.g. giving the grade of 2.4 for 61 points).

DATE OF EVALUATION: 16 August 2016



Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Czech grading	US grading
81 – 100	1	= excellent	= A
61 – 80	2	= good	= B
51 – 60	3	= satisfactory	= C
41 – 50	3	= satisfactory	= D with a warning of failing
0 – 40	4	= fail	= not recommended for defence