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M.A. Dissertation Evaluation

Foreign Policy of Obama Administration towards Iran

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Rudolf Rudyšar has selected the topic of United States foreign policy towards Iran as the topic of his Master's dissertation. Rudolf has worked with me throughout and it has been my pleasure to supervise his progress. The treatise is divided into an Introduction, five main chapters, and a Conclusion. In the ensuing paragraphs, I shall comment upon each part of the work.

In the Introduction, Rudolf spells out his aim, which is to analyze American foreign policy towards Iran keeping in mind the rapprochement between the two countries during the presidency of Barack Obama. Rudolf's hypothesis is that the rapprochement with Iran does not endanger the existing alliances the United States has in the Middle East or North Africa. I must say that the literature is critiqued well and the content of the main chapters is also explained more than sufficiently. I am satisfied with the Introduction.

Chapter 1 represents a discussion of the theoretical framework. Rudolf has opted for a realist perspective and he summarizes aptly the work of the most relevant scholars. I am quite pleased with this chapter, which demonstrates Rudolf's understanding of the theories of the scholars, whose theory he later applies.

In Chapter 2, Rudolf presents the latest events regarding policy in the region. An overview is provided of the interests, strategies, and objectives of both the United States and Iran. He explains the American alliances with Israel

and Saudi Arabia and how these will not be damaged in the long term by Obama's rapprochement strategy vis-à-vis Iran.

Chapter 3 details Iran's nuclear program and the risks this program can pose to international peace. Media reports are compared and contrasted with those of IAEA. Rudolf points out that there is no solid evidence of Iran's possession of nuclear weapons and he sees the 2015 agreement reached between the United States and Iran as trying to reassure the international community that the United States is concerned and trying to prevent Iran from acquiring such capabilities.

In Chapter 4, Rudolf discusses different United States policy approaches towards Iran. The so-called hawks have advocated a policy of sanctions and isolation (and some even a possible military solution), but the Obama administration believes that the hardline stance adopted by the previous George W. Bush administration only played into the hands of the more radical politicians in Iran. Also discussed are the reasons for the state of distrust between Iran on the one hand and Israel and Saudi Arabia on the other. He concludes the chapter by stating that there is no imminent threat posed by the United States-Iranian agreement to the security of either Israel or Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 5 ponders regional considerations. Basically, Rudolf examines the issue of Iran and its nuclear program in the context of the interests of the other regional powers. He discusses the major issue of the conflict between Shia and Sunni Islam and how this has helped the process of alliances and hostilities. The United States has to place its own interests, especially fighting radical Sunni Islam, above those of allies. He is right to point out that Saudi relations with a number of Islamist groups indicate that the interests of the Americans and the

Saudis are not always identical. Regarding Israel, Rudolf emphasizes that the Israelis enjoy overwhelming military superiority in the region, which has been enabled by the United States. Though the Israelis differ with the Obama administration on the threat posed by Iranian nuclear development, the disagreement is not enough to inflict lasting damage on U.S.-Israeli relations as such disagreements are “within the family” as Benjamin Netanyahu has publicly stated.

In the Conclusion, Rudolf recapitulates his main points and states that, although American policy towards Iran under the Obama administration might be a minor irritant in relations between the United States and its allies, Israel and Saudi Arabia, the issue is not important enough to significantly damage these alliances. Also, Rudolf stresses that the United States has other interests in the region and cannot allow for its policymaking to be dictated by its closest allies.

This dissertation is of fine quality. I have seen the improvement made by Rudolf in his analysis and conclusions over the time I have supervised his work. I recommend a classification of **EXCELLENT or VERY GOOD** depending on the quality of the oral defense.

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