



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Rudolf Rudyšar

Title: Foreign policy of Obama administration towards Iran

Programme/year: International Security Studies (2016)

Author of Evaluation (opponent): Tomáš Karásek

Criteria	Definition	Maximm	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	7
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	20
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	30
<i>Total</i>		80	57
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	9
	Style	5	4
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	18
TOTAL		100	75



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis is complex, based on a wide range of sources, comprehensively argued, and persuasive in its conclusions. Among its strength I count the analytical drive and nicely developed argumentation.

The main (but not at all fatal) drawbacks consist in the form of the thesis's theoretical framework and its operationalization. In the introduction, the author juggles with several possible theoretical approaches, including the Copenhagen School, which is later abandoned in favour of the realist approach. Given the empirical realities in the Middle East, this is generally a sensible choice. However, since the author decided to primarily focus on the impact the U.S. negotiations with Iran had on its regional allies, it is surprising how little attention has been spent on the theory of alliances. Stephen Walt is duly (and rightly) mentioned in the theoretical chapter, but primarily in relation to his concept of the balance of threats, not as a theoretician of alliances.

Furthermore, despite the author's note (once again correct) on the contribution of the realist theory towards the operationalization of IR research, his own thesis offers none such thing. There is a gap gnawing between the theoretical framework and the empirical analysis that, unfortunately, has not been bridged. Luckily for the author, the combination of abundant sources and his analytical acumen provides a compensation (of sorts) for this shortcoming.

Minor criteria:

Once again, the breadth and comprehensive nature of resources underpinning the analysis needs to be emphasised. The thesis is written in a clear, accessible language which nicely complements its analytical qualities.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis is extremely well researched and provides a persuasive analytical account of the U.S. policy in a crucial region towards a key actor. What it lacks is a methodological connection between the theoretical framework (which is partly problematic in itself in its omission of the theory of alliances) and the empirical basis.



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Suggested grade: 2

Signature: