Supervisor Review of Fliuza Tazieva’s Bachelor Dissertation titled:
“The impact of the rise of the BRICS on international relations: the case of Brazil”

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Submitted: 24 May 2016

Selection of the topic is commendable:

The dissertation addresses one of the most significant developments of recent years – the rise of the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and its impact on established global economic and political system. Although this topic is receiving increasing attention by scholars of international relations, economic globalization and geo-politics, consensus on the long-term significance of this process remains elusive. The author should, therefore, be commended for her effort to contribute to the debate, not least for addressing the relatively neglected aspect of BRICS cooperation – the position of Brazil within the grouping.

Structure of the dissertation and the treatment of the topic:

The dissertation is divided into two parts. Part I treats the rise of the BRICS and the maturing of their early coalition (with modest aims) into a collectively weighty global player, able to implement reforms, such as the recent changes in the IMF’s governance. The discussion addresses the topic adequately (given the limitations of space), with an optimal balance between the presentation of facts and analysis. It contains useful references to relevant seminal works in the field of IR theory, such as by Samuel Huntington. The narrative emphasise the potential for a peaceful resolution of tensions that the rise of the BRICS is generating, depicting the BRICS as an additional, supportive sub-system, rather than an antagonist. Constructive interpretations of this kind tend to be overlooked.

Part II focuses on the case of Brazil as a member of the BRICS group. This is a fruitful strategy. First, it offers a refreshing alternative to the frequent focus on geopolitical giants – China and Russia. Secondly, it generates interesting and important insights into neglected aspects of the BRICS’s cooperation, namely the South-South linkages. Not only does this permit a discussion of a range of pressing issues – such as the fight against poverty among countries belonging to the IBSA forum (India, Brazil and South Africa); it also shows that the IBSA members occasionally adopt a stance that significantly differs from that of China and Russia. The dissertation therefore demonstrates that the BRICS is not an inherently anti-West alliance in the way it tends to be portrayed, thus reinforcing the conclusions presented in Part I. Finally, the work provides a useful analysis of Brazil’s role as the leading Latin American power on the one hand and as a member of the global BRICS group on the other.
Suggestions for improvement:

The dissertation would benefit from the presentation of more hard data on the BRICS’s rising economic prowess and their position in international trade and financial flows (perhaps in the form of an appendix). Specifically, it lacks a detailed analysis of their mutual trade in terms of its composition, dynamics and share of their total trade turnover. The same criticism could be levelled in regard to the treatment of the IBSA forum.

However, I do not consider this weakness to be of critical importance in the work’s overall evaluation, especially in view of the fact that a bachelor dissertation offers a strictly limited scope in terms of available space and time. I would certainly urge Fliuza Tazieva to delve into these aspects, should she choose to pursue this line of inquiry in her subsequent studies.

Suggested grading:

I believe that the dissertation deserves grade 2 if grade 1 will not be considered.