

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

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

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| Title of the thesis: | Politics of state sovereignty: the US foreign policy towards Georgia and Serbia |
| Author of the thesis: | Mihajlo Savič |
| Referee (incl. titles): | Mgr. Martin Riegl, Ph.D. |

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):

| CATEGORY | POINTS |
|---|---------------|
| <i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i> | 16 |
| <i>Contribution (max. 20)</i> | 12 |
| <i>Methods (max. 20)</i> | 12 |
| <i>Literature (max. 20)</i> | 15 |
| <i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i> | 18 |
| TOTAL POINTS (max. 100) | 73 |
| The proposed grade (1-2-3-4) | 2 |

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: The submitted thesis is framed within the remedial theory of secession (with a particular focus on political discourse) which is often utilized not only by oppressed peoples or even numerically smaller groups to justify/legitimize their self-determination claims (allegedly) but also by external geopolitical players intervening into internal affairs of sovereign states. I do mainly appreciate author's application of M. Sterio's new political theory of secession which is concentrated on the broader geopolitical aspect of so called "super-powers". Furthermore Mr. Savič conceptualized crucial concepts of sovereignty and self-determination which lie in the center of the above mentioned topic.

2) Contribution: What I do like the most about the thesis is author's attempt to explain U.S. contradictory position towards self-determination claims in case of Serbia and Georgia by application of new political theory of secession. Mr. Savič asks the question: "*What is the reasoning behind the recognition of unilaterally declared independences, and at the same time, disregard of parent states' universally recognized sovereignty?*" He approaches the most geopolitically touchy cases of Serbia and Georgia which lie at the heart of the conflict between NATO and increasingly assertive Russian Federation since 2008. What I do appreciate is the author's ability to avoid any temptation to provide any sort of simplified „model“ (answer) based on quantitative criteria to explain such a complex issue.

On the other side one can barely agree with some of author's authoritative conclusions stressing the role of political economy (increasing energy demands or military spending in order to keep the global hegemony) and parent state attitude towards NATO. Such conclusion is not only too oversimplified, but simply ignores some basic facts: U.S. being the no.1 crude oil producer, diversification of supplies (e.g. towards Gulf of Guinea), defense spending cuts under B.Obama's administration. U.S. readiness to breach someone's territorial integrity through unilateral declaration of independence (which is extremely rare situation, see e.g. Washington's position towards dissolution of USSR or Yugoslavia) needs a more in-depth and multi-facet analysis. See for example R. Rich's article for U.S., EC or Australia's disinclination to recognize (postponement of

recognition) Georgia which was basically rooted in the principle of conditional and collective recognition. The U.S. motivation to back or breach someone's territorial integrity can't be explained just through the lenses of only two factors. Additional circumstances like agenda-setting, international pressure, public opinion, role of pressure groups, decision-makers' beliefs among others should be considered in foreign policy analysis. More critical approach would be really appreciated.

3) Methods: The author uses qualitative research method in order to analyse the chosen topic, the paper is primarily focused on analysis of primary sources such as the UN SC Resolutions, official U.S. administration documents, speeches etc.

4) Literature: The author quotes extensive ranges of sources including monographs, scholarly articles, primary documents, public opinions surveys or internet resources. I do appreciate the author's works with relative new works like Milena Sterio's innovative theory of secession or seminal works like A. Etzioni's paper on destructive effects of self-determination claims. However, additional literature review would be beneficial, particularly Beran's and Birch's discussion on liberal theory of secession which dates back to half of 1980's.

5) Manuscript form: The submitted thesis is divided into seven chapters including the introduction and conclusion. Furthermore the author provides useful maps, charts and graphs which enable the reader to get more detailed information related to research topic. The reviewed thesis meets all formal criteria required by Faculty of Social Sciences including the scope of the paper, its layout, style of language (misspellings occur just randomly), quality of annexes etc. From the formal point of view a division of bibliography into monographs, articles and documents would be beneficial but it's not a major deficiency.

To sum it up the author has conducted dutiful comprehensive analysis which faces certain research limits. Despite of the fact I do not find the main findings truly conclusive or proven (they are rather intuitive and suffer from inability to include more case studies), I do recommend to grade it B.

DATE OF EVALUATION: 26.1. 2016

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 | 1 | = excellent | = A |
| 61 – 80 | 2 | = good | = B |
| 51 – 60 | 3 | = satisfactory | = C |
| 41 – 50 | 3 | = satisfactory | = D |
| 0 – 40 | 4 | = fail | = not recommended for defence |