REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS
IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the thesis:</th>
<th>Border Walls: the Case of Saudi Arabia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author of the thesis:</td>
<td>Mensur Hamzič</td>
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<tr>
<td>Referee (incl. titles):</td>
<td>Mgr. Martin Riegl, Ph.D.</td>
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**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):*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical background (max. 20)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution (max. 20)</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methods (max. 20)</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>Literature (max. 20)</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Manuscript form (max. 20)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)</td>
<td>2</td>
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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 author framed his research within the Political Economic Theory of Wall Construction (PETWC) which was introduced by David B. Carter and Paul Poast in their scholarly article titled: „Why do States Build Walls.“ Mr. Hamzič decided to test the validity of the above mentioned theory on the case study of House of Sauds/Saudi Arabia – an important regional player stuck in difficult geopolitical environment and facing various geographic challenges. Therefore selection of Saudi Arabia for testifying PETWC seems to be a good choice. Although the author mostly narrows his research of border fences construction to the prism of economic disparities, he mentions other reasonings of hardening inter-state borders like break-up of civil wars, terrorism or security reasons in general.

Generally the theoretical framework is relevant and sufficient it must be note that Carter’s and Poast’s research, although very inspiring, is limited explanatory tool. Economic cross-border disparities, not only go hand in hand with deterioration of security, but can also be perceived as the root cause of migration from source countries, while the border hardening process might be explained by various aspects of securitization discourse (identitarian issues, crime-related activities). Furthermore the internal politics on the side of wall-builders can not go ignored as shown in the case of Orban’s policy of border hardening.

2) **Contribution:**

Using PETWC theoretical framework, the author explicitly test a two hypotheses, namely: 1) Saudi Border walls are consequences of low regional integration, and 2) prolonged state fragility.
The author comes to the conclusion that hardening borders is a complex phenomenon, both economic and political in nature. This is something one has to agree with. On the other side, especially the second, empirical part of the thesis is somehow flat. Particularly sub-chapter 5.1 or 5.2 gives an impression of basic „CIA factbook“ fact sheet with hardly any value added. Also some author´s statements are groundless, such as: „The Middle East is a vague term and there is no clear definition of this word from a geographical scope.“ The existence of numerous definitions and conceptualizations of the region does not mean that the term is vague. Therefore I would strongly advise to do some additional literature review (Cohen, Nye or existing literature on regionalism).

Mr. Hamzič also tends to provide another dubious statements such as: „Some consider Iran, Libya, and even Sudan to be part of the Middle East. However, most agree that Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia are not, despite geographical proximity and shared history which undoubtedly facilitated cultural exchange and interdependence.“ Who exactly? Such claims are absolutely unacceptable in the master thesis. Other statements are arther vague and of no academic value: „Moreover, today the Middle East as whole is not the same region it was fifty years ago.“ Which region is the same? Other statements are wrong: „Some of the common goals the two countries share is stability in Syria and Iraq, countering Muslim Brotherhood, the question of Palestine, and Iran.“ This is a bit out of geopolitical reality we do witness daily on the ground. Overall the submitted thesis reached the goal set down in the introduction, the added value of the thesis is its empirical part offering huge sum of information.

3) Methods:

The author uses both qualitative, as well as quantitative research methods and case study method.

4) Literature:

Some weak points have been mentioned above, I would also recommmend to apply more critical approach towards the researched topic would be proper.

5) Manuscript form:

The reviewed thesis meets formal criteria required by Faculty of Social Sciences and the overall quality of written English is satisfying. Typos could have been saved by more careful proof reading. Overall formal impression of the work is good. Paging is completely missing which really makes it difficult to review the thesis. However, much more important is author´s use of sources. Certain parts of the thesis give an impression of mosaic plagiarism (borrowing phrases and ideas without quoting source), I find this rather problematic.

**DATE OF EVALUATION:** August, 25th 2016

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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
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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 \textbf{value added} of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain \textit{why} the observed phenomena occurred? Were the policy implications well founded?

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Strong}: 20 points
\item \textbf{Average}: 10 points
\item \textbf{Weak}: 0 points
\end{itemize}

3) \textbf{METHODS}: Are the \textit{hypotheses} for this study clearly stated, allowing their further verification and testing? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and \textbf{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 \textit{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 \textit{requires your explanation “why” it is so}.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Strong}: 20 points
\item \textbf{Average}: 10 points
\item \textbf{Weak}: 0 points
\end{itemize}

4) \textbf{LITERATURE REVIEW}: The thesis demonstrates author’s full understanding and \textbf{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 \textit{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.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Strong}: 20 points
\item \textbf{Average}: 10 points
\item \textbf{Weak}: 0 points
\end{itemize}

5) \textbf{MANUSCRIPT FORM}: The thesis is \textbf{clear and well structured}. The author uses appropriate language and style, including academic \textit{format} for quotations, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and \textbf{stimulates thinking}.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Strong}: 20 points
\item \textbf{Average}: 10 points
\item \textbf{Weak}: 0 points
\end{itemize}

\noindent \textbf{Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:}

\begin{table}[h]
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{TOTAL POINTS} & \textbf{GRADE} & \textbf{Czech grading} & \textbf{US grading} \\
\hline
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 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
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