

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

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

Title of the thesis:	Third parties' role in the frozen conflicts of the South Caucasus. The Cases of Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia.
Author of the thesis:	Ganjaliyeva Farahkhanim
Referee (<i>incl. titles</i>):	Mgr. Martin Riegl, PhD.

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the five numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Theoretical background:

I see the major problem in insufficient conceptualization of key terms. The tension between the norms of territorial integrity and self-determination are being discussed, but the absolutely crucial distinction between internal and external aspect of self-determination is ignored. Without it understanding legality, or even justification of secessionist claims is impossible. Also some major arguments raised by secessionist authorities to justify their claims to independence are mentioned, but rather randomly. E.g. D.Lynch analyzed them in details (and author is obviously familiar with his work). Secondly citing Montevideo Convention as a source of international law is irrelevant in this context. Further the concept of recursive secession should be discussed due to its relation with the *uti possidetis* principle. Besides that a profound analysis the IO's approach in the frozen conflicts is difficult without understanding differences between engagement and recognition (policy of non-recognition).

2) Contribution:

The paper aims to answer research questions dealing with the role of the UN, OSCE, the EU in recursive secessionist conflicts in South Caucasus. Hypotheses are touching the impact of differing interests, roles and strategies of external actors in the IO's achievements in resolving all the above mentioned conflicts. Although the author has tried to provide an objective analysis of the researched problem, there are obvious limits stemming from lack of relevant sources she had been working with. Having said that, analysis of external player's stakes in the region are rather vague and misses

the point to certain point. Author does not even mention the main driving force behind Russia's support to all break-way regions which is creating a shatter-zone along its borders in order to prevent small states from conducting independent foreign policy (joining NATO and the EU) – see Berg, Baar, Sterio and others. Also statements such as Russia still being a global power are at least exaggerated.

3) Methods:

The paper mostly relies on the use of empirical and qualitative analysis of the selected conflicts which is relevant approach.

4) Literature:

The author has gathered a significant amount of sources. Considering the analysis to be based on the geopolitical importance of the region, I do miss works of most authors who are relevant in the field of de facto states studies/strategy of secessionists (Berg, Caspersen, Pegg, O'Loughlin, Kolossov, Ker-Lindsay, Coggins, Griffiths, Stansfield, Coppieters, Sterio Walter, Economides, Markedonov and others). Knowing these sources would enable author to understand external actor's geopolitical interests and strategies.

5) Manuscript form:

The thesis is clearly structured into ten chapters (including the introduction and conclusion). The paper meets all formal criteria of the Faculty of Social Sciences, also it allows the reader a fluent reading. However, there are several shortcomings negatively affecting the overall impression. First of all I would recommend to list acronyms in the alphabetical order which would ease one's orientation. Secondly, starting the paper with the map is not the best decision. Thirdly, dates of publications are stated rather randomly (see page 11), In this regard the chosen citation format is rather awkward (ibid. is commonly used in an endnote, or footnote not in the main body of the paper). Also better graphic quality of maps would contribute to the overall impression. Headlines and sub-headlines should not have full stop (see pages 37, 55 etc.).

Box for the thesis supervisor only. Please characterize the progress in the working out of thesis (e.g., steady and gradual versus discontinuous and abrupt) and the level (intensity) of communication/cooperation with the author:

...

Suggested questions for the defence are:

„...“

I recommend ~~/I do NOT recommend/~~ the thesis for final defence.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20 points)</i>	15
<i>Contribution (max. 20 points)</i>	12
<i>Methods (max. 20 points)</i>	14
<i>Literature (max. 20 points)</i>	12
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20 points)</i>	14
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	67
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	D

DATE OF EVALUATION: 12.9.2018

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honour)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honour)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.

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 to this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts **omitted**? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently **incorporated with the topic** and hypotheses tested? Has the author demonstrated a genuine **understanding** of the theories addressed?

Strong	Average	Weak
20	15	< 10

 points

2) CONTRIBUTION: Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and the 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	15	< 10

 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 12 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**.

Strong	Average	Weak
20	15	< 10

 points

4) LITERATURE REVIEW: The thesis demonstrates the author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author **quotes** relevant literature in a **proper way** and works with a **representative bibliography**. (Remarks: 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 a much better impression. Any sort of **plagiarism** disqualifies the thesis from admission to defence.)

Strong	Average	Weak
20	15	< 10

 points

5) MANUSCRIPT FORM: The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate **language and style**, including the academic **format for quotations**, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking**. The text is free from typos and easy to comprehend.

Strong	Average	Weak
20	15	< 10

 points