

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:	Farahkhanim Ganjaliyeva
Referee (incl. titles):	Dr. Vít Střítecký

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

1) Theoretical background:

The thesis designs a potentially interesting research puzzle but to a large extent fails to deliver the results on both conceptual/theoretical as well as empirical levels. The theoretical part builds on some relevant resources from the conflictological field but unfortunately does not address the main research issues – effectiveness and role of “neutral” actor’s roles, interest, and strategies. Additionally, it is not entirely clear why the author specifically addresses the issue of conflicting narratives as well as the contingency approach associated with third party intervention. In general, the theoretical part reads as a general conflict resolution literature review while it does not provide any coherent and effective analytical framework.

2) Contribution:

The contributions of the thesis are rather limited and can be solely connected with the empirical part, where the author summarizes some of the latest empirical developments in the regions in focus. The thesis does not offer any innovative analytical framework nor a original data-based analysis

3) Methods:

The methodological side of the thesis is rather poor as well. The hypotheses are not conceptually grounded and in the end are not even tested. The thesis does have a logical research design but fails to fulfill the aims conceptually as well as methodologically.

4) Literature:

The research is based on a solid resource base. The crucial problem does not lie in the lack or irrelevance of the sources but in the weak conceptual background.

5) Manuscript form:

The thesis is well-structured and reads well (despite her conceptual incoherence). I wonder about the inspiration regarding the citation format but in the end it is coherent and understandable

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:

The progress was steady and gradual. Farahk has invested a proper energy into writing of the thesis but generally failed to work effectively with the theoretical literature. On the other hand, she has a sense for intuitive analysis and apparently knows the region very well.

Suggested questions for the defence are:

I see the major problems with the thesis in the conceptual part, Regardless of it, it would be interesting to see whether the crucial actors (Russia, EU, US) reveal some dynamic regarding their positions, interests, and strategies and in what way this may/may not affect the potential of the organisation working in the region.

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>	13
<i>Contribution (max. 20 points)</i>	12
<i>Methods (max. 20 points)</i>	12
<i>Literature (max. 20 points)</i>	15
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20 points)</i>	15
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	67
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	D

DATE OF EVALUATION: 18/9/2018

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

Remarks for the referees:

- 1) Download the thesis from the SIS. If you have no access to SIS, please ask the secretary of IPS (jana.krejcikova@fsv.cuni.cz, tel. 251 080 214) for sending you the thesis by e-mail.
- 2) Use the IEPS Thesis Report form only for your comments. **It is a standard at the FSV UK that the Referee's Report is at least 400 words.** In case you assess the thesis as "non-defendable", please explain the concrete reasons for that in detail.
- 3) Retain your critical stance. You cannot confer more than 80 points upon a thesis that does not satisfy research standards in top European universities.
- 4) Upload the Report as PDF/A file into the SIS. Instructions on how to convert .DOCx to PDF/A): „Save as“ – select „PDF“ – check-in „Options or Možnosti“ that „PDF options“ tick „ISO 19005-1 compliant /kompatibilní s/ (PDF/A)“ – „Save“. If you have no access to SIS, please send the unsigned PDF file to the secretary of IPS (jana.krejcikova@fsv.cuni.cz).
- 5) Please deliver to the IPS Secretariat, U Kříže 8, 15800 Praha 5 Jinonice, **two hand-signed originals**. Unfortunately, a photocopied report with signature does not suffice. Sorry.
- 6) Your Report will be remunerated, so we need also your account information (separate from this form).