

**REPORT ON MASTER THESIS**  
**CENTER FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES**

<b>STUDENT:</b>	<b>Martin Kosik</b>
<b>ADVISOR:</b>	<b>Vasily Korovkin</b>
<b>TITLE OF THE THESIS:</b>	<b>The Effect of Military Campaigns on Political Identity: Evidence from Sherman's March</b>

*OVERALL ASSESSMENT (provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):*

**CONTRIBUTION:**

Martin's thesis focuses on an important episode of the US Civil War and American History to draw lessons from the past and apply them to the present. This critical episode is Sherman's March of 1864. During this March, General Sherman's army started at Atlanta and reached the sea, devastating the localities on their way.

Martin investigates March's long-term *political and social* effects in the late 19th and throughout the 20th century. He studies such outcomes as voting behavior and personal identity, measured by names. The changes in those outcomes are potentially more important consequences of the March than economic outcomes per se.

The main empirical findings from the comparison of counties affected by the March and control-group counties are:

1. There is no statistically significant effect on the democrat vote share up to World War II.
2. There is some statistically significant effect on the Democrat vote share after Republicans and Democrats switched their political agendas after WWII.
3. There is some effect on the naming patterns.

I find the latter to be the most important result of the paper.

**METHODS:**

Martin collected most of the historical data himself, which, at least for some variables, constitutes a separate contribution on its own.

To achieve the causal interpretation of the findings, the author uses an impressive battery of identification strategies. The first approach is to control for the observable characteristics of the counties via an OLS regression with state fixed effects and covariates. He draws from the existing practice on bounding the bias from unobservables by Altonji, Elder, Todd, and Taber (JHR2005) and Oster (JBES, 2019).

The second approach relies on the instrumental variables. Following the Feigenbaum, Lee, and Mezzanotti (accepted at AEJ: EP) paper, Martin uses a straight line between the three main cities on the March's path (Atlanta, Savannah, and Columbia) as an instrument. The instrument takes a

value of one for the county if its area intersects with a 10 km band around the straight lines. Thus, the deviation from the straight line will yield credible identification. Martin discusses the main assumptions for the IV to work: validity and relevance. He probes relevance by using a variety of tests for weak IV.

The third strategy is difference-in-differences. Martin uses the difference between observed vote shares and vote shares in 1860, thus implicitly controlling for the pre-war voting patterns. He also tests for parallel trends in some of the specifications.

#### **LITERATURE:**

The literature review is thoroughly done. It cites all the necessary papers in the econ literature on conflict and the relevant historical literature on the Civil War.

I have to stress that even though the paper by Feigenbaum, Lee, and Mezzanotti (accepted at AEJ: EP), explores the economic consequences of Sherman's campaign, Martin's thesis is still very novel, and it *complements* their findings rather than competes with them.

#### **MANUSCRIPT FORM:**

I find it very well-structured. Please see the details below.

#### **SUMMARY AND SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE DISCUSSION DURING THE DEFENSE:**

I find the thesis to be excellent, both in the substance and its form. I would potentially format some of the tables and graphs differently, but this is minor. I would like, however, to see more results related to the naming patterns if the author aims at publishing the paper, so maybe he can mention it more during the defense. Otherwise, I am delighted by its quality.

**I recommend the thesis for defense.**

#### **TEXT ORIGINALITY CONTROL**

I confirm that I acquainted myself with the report on the originality of the text of the thesis from

Theses    Turnitin    Ouriginal (Urkund)

#### **Comments on the reported results:**

I am confident that it is an original thesis. There are some slight similarities, such as the titles of the published papers in the reference list.

**SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED** *(for details, please see the page 3)*

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
Contribution <i>(max. 30 points)</i>	29
Methods <i>(max. 30 points)</i>	30
Literature <i>(max. 20 points)</i>	20
Manuscript Form <i>(max. 20 points)</i>	18
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b> <i>(max. 100 points)</i>	<b>97</b>
<b>GRADE</b> <i>(A – B – C – D – E – F)</i>	<b>A</b>

**NAME OF THE REFEREE:**

Vasily Korovkin

**DATE OF EVALUATION:**

August 19, 2021



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**REFEREE SIGNATURE**