

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

GPS – Geopolitical Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	Buck-passing: A Theoretical Framework and Case Studies on the Munich Crisis and the Korean War
Author of the thesis:	Wen Tai Yun
Referee (incl. titles):	RNDr. Jan Kofroň, 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>	20
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	17
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	19
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	20
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	17
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)	93
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	A

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the 5 numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

- 1) Theoretical background:** The thesis aims to analyze and fine-tune one of the most important theoretical concept (at least from the perspective of a neorealist). In this sense its very nature is theoretical. The theoretical framework is clear, logical and – at least according to my point of view – relevant. Actually, I think the very theoretical framing of the thesis makes it quite distinctive if compared to most GPS theses.
- 2) Contribution:** the thesis has a very ambitious goal. Not only to review existing conceptualizations of buck-passing, but also to offer a fine-tuned novel version of it. From my perspective the biggest contribution lies in the analysis and comparison of the existing conceptualization of the buck-passing. It is definitively outstanding.

I also like the authors attempt to provide a fine-tuned version of the concept – by distinguishing „intent, action, and outcome“. If his conceptualization will travel behing his thesis is (obviously) an open question (see the final point).

- 3) Methods:** The thesis has several sections; thus it uses several methods. The section describing existing contributions on the buck-passing exploits a comparative approach (even if embedded in literature review approach). The empirical section build upon two typical (or proto-typical) cases – I see this choice as optimal for this stage of the research. Overall, the thesis is logically structured and its individual sections are quite well connected creating a persuasive argument.

4) Literature: The manuscript uses the key literature on the subject. While many GPS master theses have large blind spots in terms of literature covered, this is not the case with Wen's thesis. In fact, If I had to deal with the issue of buck-passing, I would start with reviewing the literature Wen analyzed in his thesis. In addition, the literature is not just cited or passingly mentioned, it is actually discussed, compared and analyzed.

5) Manuscript form: I like the form of the thesis overall. If I shall mention some (relatively insignificant) issues... (i) I think the table comparing buck-passing “Summary of Four Buck-passing Works’ Buck-Passing Operationalizations” should not be in the appendix, but it should be in the text! It should be a key part of the literature review (and it truly helps a reader to understand all the nuances of alternative conceptualization of the buck-passing). (ii) Table 1 and 2 – I don’t think it is good (reader friendly) to use 10 decimal numbers (sic!) – three or four would be absolutely ok. (iii) The thesis is quite long. As it is a well written thesis, I am ok, with it, but I can imagine that a reviewer might turn down the thesis and ask for reductions (note normally GPS theses are under 100 pages). While this point might seem rather secondary, I think it must be mentioned. The reason is that if the author would like to promote his “buck-passing” conceptualization to other academicians, he would have to put his key argument within something like 10 000 words – and that could be pretty challenging considering the extent of the current thesis.

DATE OF EVALUATION: 17.1.2022

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
91 – 100	A	= excellent
81 - 90	B	= good
71 – 80	C	= satisfactory
61 - 70	D	= satisfactory
51 - 60	E	
0	F	= fail (not recommended for defence)