

## IEPS MASTER THESIS OPPONENT REVIEW FORM

STUDENT NAME: Mohammed Khayat

THESIS TITLE: How will the UN be able to resolve international conflicts under the current international system?

OPPONENT NAME: Michal Parizek, MSc

OPPONENT GRADE: (1, 2, 3 or Fail)

3

### REVIEW

*(Please fill your critique in here in about 2 pages, regarding the suitability of the students work, the structure of the thesis, methodology, resources used and overall grade for the thesis)*

Mr. Mohammed Khayat's Master's thesis on "UN's ability to resolve international conflicts under the current international system" without a doubt is not an instance of good quality Master's thesis. To the contrary, the text suffers from many problems, some of them serious, some of them less so. The positives are scarce but not totally absent.

#### **Suitability of the work**

Firstly, the reviewed work set an interesting question, one that probably attracts many researchers' and students' attention. At the same time, however, the question as such is not an easy one and it ought to be said that answering it in a Master's thesis would be difficult even if much more effort was put into the text. Given this, the problems apparent in the text are predictable right from the outset.

Secondly, the work suffers from the fact that the author does not specify clearly what he means by international system (apart from one rather vague sentence on p. 7) and does not at all provide indicators of success and failure of UN's activities. The substantial lack of conceptual clarity prevents the work from giving the proposed question specific meaning, and explaining how to answer it in a methodologically and logically bearable way. As a result, author is unable to provide unambiguous evidence for his (rather bold) claims.

The topic is timely in political terms and this obviously makes it more difficult to handle. The author presents little systematic investigation of the topic; I believe that focusing on and elaborating upon the table presented on p. 69 – i.e. at the very end of the text – would have made the text much better, it would give it clearer meaning.

### **Structure of the thesis**

The structure is sometimes chaotic, levels of headings change without system (e.g. pp. 41 vs. 43). The chapter called The *current* international system and the UN (my emphasis) ends with the end of the Cold war.

Chapter headings often do not relate directly to the text of the chapters.

Given the actual nature of the topic probably less space should have been given to relatively distant history (i.e. more than 20 years ago). However, it is understandable that in face of a highly complex situation of today's role of the UN the author 'escapes' by referring to the past.

It is not clear from the structure of the text how the author proceeds in order to address the core question; this makes the text more difficult to read.

### **Methodology**

Although the topic and the approach the author adopts naturally tend towards comparative case study methodology, no signs of its conscious use are present in the text. The author moves the analysis towards more historical approach, which does not pose a problem in the first parts of the thesis where historical events are discussed, but proves insufficient later in the discussion of very recent international conflicts.

### **Resources used**

In some parts of the text academic resources are lacking substantially although it is obvious that not for all the events discussed relevant academic literature is available; at these points it would have been good if the text was backed at least by references to non-academic literature.

Some parts of the text (the conflict-solution UN tools) refer to academic texts much more often – this is how all the text should have looked like (although more sources would be appropriate even in this section).

**Language**

Unfortunately, the text is fairly poorly written which prevents the reader from clear understanding on particular places. Frequent typos show the text was finalized at the last moment and was not proof-read carefully. It is not unusual that the author repeats himself.

**Overall grade for the thesis**

Mr. Khayat's Master's thesis is of low quality. It asks interesting and very timely question, it tries to face a difficult topic. At the same time, however, it mostly fails to give a full and reliable account of the topic. A slightly higher amount of time and energy spent on the text in the final phase would have improved the work substantially.

The overall suggested grade is: **3**.

Prague, January 30, 2010

Michal Parizek

