

IMESS dissertation						
Name/code:	Maria Chernyaeva					
Dissertation title:	Ethnicity, Territoriality, and Conflict in the South Caucasus – A Qualitative Comparative Analysis					
Scale: 5 - excellent, 4 - good, 3 - satisfactory, 2 - poor, 1 – very poor						
	5	4	3	2	1	
ARGUMENT:						
Clearly defined research question	5					No clearly defined research question
Answers research question	5					Does not answer research question
Well structured	5					Badly structured
Shows theoretical awareness	5					Shows no theoretical awareness
Conceptual clarity	5					Conceptual confusion
Empirically appropriate & robust		4				Full of empirical errors
Logical and coherent	5					Illogical and incoherent
Analytical	5					Descriptive
Critical	5					Uncritical
Shows independent thought	5					Does not show independent thought
SOURCES & USAGE:						
Evidence of reading/research	5					No evidence of reading/research
Effective use of sources/data	5					Ineffective use of sources/data
WRITING STYLE:						
Clear	5					Obscure
Good punctuation	5					Poor punctuation
Grammatically correct	5					Grammatically incorrect
PRESENTATION:						
Appropriate length	5					Too long/short
Good referencing	5					Poor/inconsistent referencing
Good spelling	5					Poor spelling
Good bibliography	5					Poor bibliography
Deducted for late submission:		Deducted for faulty referencing:			Mark*: A	
Charles marker Emil Souleimanov		Signed:			Date: 17 June 2012	

* Mark: A = 70+; B = 65-69; C = 60-64; D = 55-59; E = 50-54; F = fail, less than 50

Scheme of award (assessment criteria):

	Charles University**	IMESS
Excellent	Výborně [1]	A
Very Good	Velmi dobře [2]	B
Good	Velmi dobře [2.5]	C
Satisfactory	Dobře [3]	D
Sufficient	Dobře [3.5]	E
Fail	Neprospěl [4]	F

CONTINUES OVERLEAF

NOTE: Please provide substantive and detailed feedback

Comments (at least 300 words)

I consider Maria's work an example of how a close to perfect M.A. thesis in the field of political science/international relations/area studies should look like.

First, she has showed – and employed for that matter – considerable knowledge of methodology of social sciences research which has enabled her to sharpen her focus on what is crucial while leaving out empirical information of little importance. One realizes the significance of this approach with regard to the fact that the South Caucasus in general and the ethno-territorial conflicts that have (or have not) taken place in this region in particular are empirically extremely complicated and robust. The qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) employed by Maria in this study seems to have helped her reveal causal relationships, while avoiding a quite widespread practice in some other methodological approaches to incidents of civil wars of simplifying the contextual richness for the sake of clarity. In fact, in a situation where hammering out a theory of civil war (and ethno-territorial conflict) appears to be too elusive when qualitative approaches (based on in-depth analysis of a small amount of case studies which makes generalization difficult) are being used, and quantitative methodologies pave the way for a variety of (often contradictory) interpretations of data raising even more questions than giving answers, the QCA might serve as a useful methodological alternative. Additionally, in the case of Maria's study, of particular importance is the fact that QCA encourages looking not only at the causes of why conflicts actually happened, but also at the causes of why they did not. Beyond any doubt, the utilization of the QCA approach has paid off in this study. The methodological strength of Maria's work – coupled with a superb theoretical framing – has contributed a great deal to an outstanding outcome of her research.

Second, the empirical part of research undertaken by Maria is quite solid, which is particularly meritorius with regard to the fact that she had not been focusing on the South Caucasus region beforehand. The selection of case studies out of a variety of active or latent (for the period of research) conflicts with ethno-territorial component makes sense.

Third, and last but not least, the analytical skills of the author, her ability to see both detail and context and draw unbiased, yet clear conclusions deserve particular credit.

To sum up, I consider Maria's M.A. thesis an extraordinary piece of research that has proven her qualities of a scholar in the beginning of her (I hope) professional career, as well as a thinker, and suggest that she is given the highest mark ("A").

Specific questions for oral defence (at least 100 words)

1) *In the opinion of the author, what are the main findings of her research that might be found relevant to (or applicable in) other areas of ethno-territorial conflict?*

2) *Does the explication of causes of ethno-territorial conflict have any impact on the ways they might be settled?*