CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE

Faculty of Social Sciences Institute of International Studies

M. A. DISSERTATION MARK SHEET

(Opponent's Review)

Student: Huseynli Javid

Program: Balkan, Eurasian and Central European Studies

Title: Turkey and the Balkans in the Geopolitics of the Contemporary Regional Development,

Prague 2015, 91 pp.

Reviewed by:

PhDr. Ondřej Žíla, Ph.D., Department of Russian and East European Studies, Institute of International Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague

1. CONTENT AND AIM OF THE THESIS:

Huseynli Javid has chosen a considerably contemporary, but also a really broad topic. He decided to explain how and why Turkey influences the development of the Balkan region in contemporary geopolitics. He tries to show that Turkish companies, as well as the government, are creating mutual needs in order to develop the region for further cooperation on an economic and political level [p. 4]. Methodologically, in order to determine the areas of influence, he used Saul Cohen's book about the Geopolitics of the World System. He chose the geopolitical approaches and features, which are related to Turkey's activeness in the Balkan region, more specifically mainly Cohen's term "equilibrium". Using this framework Javid analyses the growing Turkish influence over the Balkans from political and socioeconomic perspectives. He stresses that sustainable development, which is an important concept for the health of future relationships, corporate social responsability and energy politics could develop further cooperation between Turkey, the Balkan countries and the European Union. To be clear his main aim is to investigate why Turkey influences the Balkan region and in what ways this influence defines the further relations and developments of the region. The time frame of Javid's dissertation thesis captures the developments from 2002 until now, especially, the period since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) began to rule. After AKP designated its principal government, Turkish foreign policy was crucially modified and developed a new drive.

2. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

As I have already mentioned, the chosen topic of his thesis, the influence of Turkey on Balkan area, is quite extensive. Javid had to thoroughly describe a historical context, why Turkey is so focused on the Balkan region, he had to broadly explain Davutoğlu's geopolitical concept about the Balkan region, he had to encompass many aspects of Turkey's Balkan involvement (e.g. political relationship, Turkey's strategy of soft power, economic partnership, Turkish energy politics, sustainability of the region and economic cooperation), and he had to summarize the European Union's position on Turkish-Balkan relations. Due to this extensively various range of the topic the author had to naturally generalize too much, which had a detrimental impact on the depth of his examination. More likely than an in-depth and thorough analysis Javid's text looks at times like a commented textbook explanation or a prepared framework for the next detailed research. Also, the author often goes uncritically along with the narrative of official statements from the Turkish government. He adopts thoughts and statements taken from primary sources without compelling or critical analysis.

Javid's text is not based on analysis of statistical data or other quantitative primary sources. A lot of his statements and comments are not put into a broad context. Sometimes there is no thorough explanation for why he is mentioning some statements. Being concrete, at least once, he states e.g. that "Greece benefited from the advantages of being a member of the EU and improved their policies towards Balkan countries in order to influence the speed of development in the Balkan region" [p. 69]

without further analysis or explanation of this pronouncement. The author's argumentation, which is not carefully grounded by the diverse scale of data, seems to be relatively superficial. Instead of making an effort to cover all the aforementioned aspects of Turkey's involvement in the Balkans, I would argue that the author should choose one of these described issues and more closely analyse it. Javid's thesis rather looks like a compilation of gathered materials from published authors, from books and articles, as well as online journals. The biggest limitation for the author, which Javid has correctly admitted, is the fact that the timing of writing his thesis was not perfect. At that time the governments were (or are) still discussing the proposed projects and because of that specific governmental agreements on the particular proposed project has not yet been concluded.

3. PRESENTATION AND STYLE:

Due to the aforementioned facts the text could be more cohesive. Its continuity is disrupted at times by unnecessarily protracted statements, which monotonously repeat some thoughts and facts (especially the frequent reference to the relationship between Turkey and Balkan states due to their cultural, historical and religious connections. Another is the statement that Turkey will become an energy hub for Europe as well as increasing its importance in the Balkan area, which will create a sustainable region for future economic investments). There are some unclear statements too. For example there is no interconnection between the argumentation that "For Davutoğlu, the Dayton Agreement that concluded the Bosnian war expresses a provisional resolution" and next sentence "However, the Albanian issue remains unresolved" [p. 22]. I consider Javid's term "ethnic areas" [p. 35] to be an unsuitable for the designation of states Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Speaking about the ethnic complexity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the author uses an expression "ethnic units" [p. 37]. It would be better to replace this with the term "constitutive nations". Also, the author's name for the state "Bosnia" [p. 26. 36] is not correct and should be mentioned properly under the complete heading, e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina.

If there are different sources written by the same author in the same year in a parenthetical citation, it should be more specifically distinguished which sources are referenced (e.g. there are two articles from Davutoğlu in 2008 [p. 83]. On page 52 there is cited a parenthetical citation (Souleminavov, Kraus, 2012) which is not listed in the references at the end of thesis.

Due to the underdeveloped critical analysis of primary sources the author mentioned in his thesis a lot of clichés: "Turkey wants the Muslims living in Balkan nations to live in their own state in peace and in security together with economic cooperation" [p. 72], "With Turkey's help, the European Union could be able to provide tolerance, reconciliation and a contribution to the development and improvement of different cultures living together" [p. 72].

Although the formal structure of the thesis is slightly different than is a common usage, the author at first encloses his master proposal in which he presents his methodology and literature review and only then does he open the thesis with introductory chapter, it is quite clear and comprehensible. Nevertheless the style of the text is readable.

4. COMMENTS:

When conducting the analysis Javid should clearly define how Turkey delienates the region "Balkans". Turkey considers the former Yugoslavian countries, Albania, Bulgaria and sometimes Romania (Mitrović 2014) to be part of the Balkan area. Javid uses the term "Balkan region" in his text quite vaguely, without any clear definition. Once, he refers to the Balkans talking about the ex-Yugoslavian area [p. 20], whereas on page 29 he states that "Balkan countries are potential candidates for the European Union and therefore for Turkey the Balkan area is extremely important". Just remember that Romania and Bulgaria since 2007 and Croatia since 2013 are members of the European Union. An attentative reader could also conclude from the Javid's text that the author considers "the Balkans" the countries where Islam is significantly present (Bosnia and Herzegovina primarily, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo), or where Turkey has really strong geostrategic interests connected

to local muslim minorities, specially in Serbia. Although it is physically not a neighbour state, Serbia is defined by this status by the Turkish government. The Turkish government is well aware that without close coooperation with Serbia by "win-win" and "soft power" strategies the tight political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina can not be effectively resolved. The author mixes up these Balkan states sometimes, including Greece.

Additionally, Javid does not define the term "Western Balkan". It is true that officially Turkey does not use the term Western Balkan (Mitrović 2014: 18–19). In the case of mentioning the ex-yugoslav states the author initially ignores this term, but on pages 46–47 he suddenly uses it without any closer specification. Afterwards he does not work with this term anymore. Because of lacking more detailed definitions, it is at times unclear whether he is talking about the Balkans or about the Western Balkans [e.g. on page 46]. He mixes these two term without thorough differentiation.

Also, Javid mentions in his work the two sub-regions of economic trade in the Balkans with Turkey. The first sub-region constitutes the member countries of the European Union such as Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. According to the author the second subregion is connected to the Western Balkan countries and is comprised of Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina namely [p. 47]. There is no clear explanation why he did not also mention Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia in this categorization.

It is surprising that, the author in his thesis neglects the expression "Neo-Ottomanism". Again, even though Davutoğlu, Turkish foreign minister from 2009 to 2014 and "head architect" of the new foreign policy, openly rejected the concept of Neo-Ottomanism, he believes that the historical heritage of the Ottoman period should be considered as one of the central elements in organizing Turkey's foreign policy (Mitrović 2014: 9). Although the thesis draws even from a source which has "Neo-Ottomanism" in its heading, the author does not reflect on this term at all.

5. QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:

In his introduction Javid mentioned that Turkey was less noticeable in the region until the end of the 90's due to its internal political and economic conditions [p. 13]. He explains reasons for Turkey's iproving condition maintaining that "Turkey's efforts for an arbitrating position in the Balkan region were equivalent to the growth in its economic supremacy" [p. 23]. Could he be more specific and explain in the framework of new foreign policy how the developments in Turkey's position and influence have come about?

Javid states that in the Balkan region "Turkey's interests are not a secret and, throughout history, Balkan countries have played a significant role in supporting Turkish integration towards the European Union" [p. 10]. Can he explain this statement in more detail?

Speaking about TIKA in connection to the Balkan countries the author should mentioned that especially Bosnia and Herzegovina is the biggest receiver of financial support provided by this organization after Afghanistan. Javid in his text also analyses another government organization Diyanet, an authority for Islamic religious affairs. How is accepted the financial, material and cultural support of this institution in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Diyanet because of the disagreement with the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina has no representative office?

6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Regardless the above mentioned critical remarks I consider Javid's thesis a relatively well-founded work based on a wide variety of literature. Due to these reasons I recommend Huseynli Javid's MA Dissertation "Turkey and the Balkans in the Geopolitics of the Contemporary Regional Development" to oral defense with proposed assessment of very good (velmi dobře, 2).

Date: Prague, June 5, 2015 Signature: