

**Evgenia Belyaeva: Dynamics of the Arab States Positions in the Arab-Israeli Conflict and the Perspectives for Peace.**

**(89 pg + appendixes)**

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External Examiner's Report

The topic chosen by Evgenia Belyaeva is not a simple one. It analyses the dynamics of the Arab states' positions: *Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan*, to the Israeli – Arab Conflict. This theme belongs to the issues of the complex Arab / Palestinian – Israeli conflict, but is sometimes overshadowed by more outstanding issues in the conflict between Israelis and the Palestinians. However, the Arab states' attitudes and positions towards Israel are the crucial determinant for understanding the dynamics in the relations between Israel and its neighbors, and they also help to understand why the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the most intractable disputes in the modern history.

The introductory part of the thesis includes an historical overview of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, starting with the Balfour Declaration, moving to the UN GA Resolution 181 and leading to the War in 1948 (al-Nagba or Independence War). Already the War in 1948 shows the first discontent in the Arab positions to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. The author shows the difference in intentions of the Arab states and rightly states that at this period of time the Arab states were even more fundamental to the conflict than the Palestinians and caused that the conflict moved from the local to the international level.

The core part of the thesis evolves from around the period after the War in 1967 until the most recent times, which the author redivides into three periods in order to show the dynamics of the Arab positions on the fundamental milestones of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The so-called ideological fight (so-called frozen diplomacy) from 1967 till 1973 was the first significant phase in the Arab positions and attitudes. The power gap after the tremendous victory of Israel in 1967 did not allow any retreat from hard-line Arab positions. As a result of the war the Arab states admitted Israel as "an existing reality", though their approach was characterized by an unyielding ideological rigidity. Despite the common diplomatic course adopted by the Arab states at the Khartoum Summit, there were considerable differences among the Arab states as well.

This attitude was interrupted by the War in 1973 that, as the author points out, had a sobering effect on all states and allowed a transformation into a more realist approach. The Yom Kippur War (Ramadan War) was a turning point in the relations between Israel and its neighbors. At that time the economic relations with the West were one of the driving forces behind the change in the Arab positions towards Israel. Israel proved to be not invincible in the eyes of its Arab neighbors. Hence, this war was a successful attempt by the Arab states to revenge the humiliating defeat from 1967 War and paved way to a political process.

The last phase started with the changes after 1989 and was allowed by the end of the bipolar system. As the author points out, this part is aimed at showing the degree to which the Arab states are actually willing to accept a peaceful settlement with Israel and hence bring to a conclusion the development of their policies towards Israel. The author mentions the Madrid conference and notices that this conference indicated readiness and need of the Arab states to normalize relations with Israel. This chapter also analyses the reaction of the "frontline" states

to the Oslo I, the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty and the reaction of Syria towards the peace process in the 1990s.

Throughout the thesis, the author also mentions the Palestinian issue, which is not the core issue of analysis, however, it plays a pivotal role in the Israeli-Arab conflict. It can be nothing but agreed the Palestine question was often manipulated by the Arab regimes, as the author also clearly states, to mobilize public opinion or to justify political moves. The author also draws reader's attention to the fact that in relation to the Palestinians there exists a dichotomy in Arab attitudes.

The overall objective of the thesis outlined in the introduction, i.e. to follow the dynamics and development of the Arab states' attitudes and positions to the Israeli-Arab conflict and towards the State of Israel, was fully accomplished. The thesis is based on a solid study of resources. The author presents the topic in a very clear and elaborate way.

Regarding the content, I do not have any objections. In addition, the thesis is written in perfect English.

Hence, I fully recommend the thesis for defense; I evaluate it by mark "výborně" ("A").

Prague, June 12<sup>th</sup> 2006

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