

## REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<b>Participation and role of EU in resolving Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict</b>
<b>Author of the thesis:</b>	<b>Ahmad Hasanov</b>
<b>Referee (incl. titles):</b>	<b>Mgr.Martin Riegl, PhD.</b>

**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):

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	8
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	8
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	10
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	16
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	12
<b>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)</b>	<b>3-4</b>

You can even use a decimal point (e.g. giving the grade of 2.5 for 60 points).

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

#### **1) Theoretical background:**

The author has divided his work into eight chapters including introduction and conclusion. Mr. Hasanov is working with five following hypotheses (I would rather say propositions): "1) Despite the fact that the Nagorno-Karabakh War has ended a long time ago, the conflict is still ongoing between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which makes the region a hot spot, 2) Russia is interested in maintaining the status quo in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Such actions are undertaken by Russia in order to prevent Armenia and Azerbaijan from leaving its sphere of influence, and in order to have levers of influence on Western countries, 3) Russia is interested in maintaining the status quo in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Such actions are undertaken by Russia in order to prevent Armenia and Azerbaijan from leaving its sphere of influence, and in order to have levers of influence on Western countries, 4) The United States of America wants to keep Armenia away from Russia's sphere of influence, and also not to lose Azerbaijan, thus having its own interests in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, 5) Engagement of the European Union in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through its different institutions can contribute to effective resolution of disputes between the parties involved in it."

Due to lack of theoretical framework, I have decided to award 8 points for this aspect of the thesis.

#### **2) Contribution:**

The author of the thesis has decided to analyze the frozen conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia (over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh), which is one of the Euro-Asian frozen conflicts. Mr. Hasanov is trying to explain roots of the conflict from the historical perspective, development of the conflict, role of external players (the EU, Turkey, Russia, Kazakhstan and Iran) during the peace talks and their geopolitical and geo-economic goals of external players in the region.

The main contribution of the reviewed thesis is author's ability to provide historical overview of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and the role of all above mentioned mediators (the EU, Russia, Iran, Turkey and Kazakhstan), however this part of the thesis is rather a loose compilation of indirect quotations. On the other side, the submitted paper does not provide truly detailed nor insightful analysis into the researched topic, although the author's research is undoubtedly topical and to some extent contributes to the political science knowledge.

While I am sympathetic to analyzing of the role of external actors in the Nagorno-Karabakh, I mainly see little original research (solid arguments) which would make this thesis original. There is a lot of information (information, conclusions etc.) presented, but nothing that really broadens information that reader can find in existing literature. Many facts and conclusions are surely correct, valid and interesting, at least as far as I can tell. The author is undoubtedly knowledgeable about the geopolitical situation in the region, but I do not see the value-added. In the end I would like to apologize for the harshness of some of my comments.

The author's contribution to understanding of researched topic and its academic value remains below average and most of conclusions are a bit flat, therefore I decided to award 8 points for this aspect of the thesis.

### **3) Methods:**

The author based her research on historical approach. Besides that Mr. Hasanov mentions deductive analysis. I decided to award 10 points for this aspect of the thesis.

### **4) Literature:**

The author of the submitted thesis showed his ability to collect sufficient amount of sources (including primary documents, monographs, the format of references is uniform throughout the thesis). What I find a major flaw is the fact that sources are not critically analyzed nor discussed (the author uncritically reckons on selected sources and does not analyze them systematically), the thesis rather gives a feeling of compilation of indirect quotations. Furthermore the author did not line up the list of sources in the alphabetical order (despite of the fact he was instructed to do so).

I decided to award 16 points for this aspect of the thesis.

### **5) Manuscript form:**

The reviewed thesis fulfills most of formal criteria of the diploma thesis required by Faculty of Social Sciences (except of list of sources or key words). Also the structure of the thesis is logically structured into eight chapters including introduction and conclusion.

The whole thesis complies with a minimum demanded scope of 50 pages. I must state that the author has not consulted the thesis with me on a regular basis (despite of the fact he had been asked to do so several times nor incorporated my comments and objections into his thesis). Thus the thesis evinces major shortcomings (most seriously the level of language is rather poor and barely meets the standards for academic writing, grammar and stylistic mistakes are rather often, list of sources should be in the alphabetical order). The thesis should be proofread once again.

Overall I recommend the thesis to be defended. The manuscript form itself is rather average so I decided to award 12 points.

### **Question:**

The author argues (page 60): “ *However, in recent years, Azerbaijan has considerably lost its support by the international community, and several American states and one Australian state have already voted for recognition of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.* ” Could you please explain which state did recognize NK? What does it mean one Australian state?

**DATE OF EVALUATION:**

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**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	US grading
81 – 100	<b>1</b>	= excellent	= A
61 – 80	<b>2</b>	= good	= B
51 – 60	<b>3</b>	= satisfactory	= C
41 – 50	<b>3</b>	= satisfactory	= D
0 – 40	<b>4</b>	= fail	= not recommended for defence