

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

GPS – Geopolitical Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	BALANCE OF POWER OR HEGEMONY IN SOUTH AMERICA?
Author of the thesis:	Matías Iglésias
Referee (incl. titles):	RNDr. Jan Kofroň, Ph.D.

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):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background (max. 20)</i>	20
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	16
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	17
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	20
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	18
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)	91
The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)	

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: Given that thesis engages in (theory driven) scenario-building, there is clear and consistent use of selected theories. It follows that these theories in fact form the narrative of the whole thesis. Specifically, Mearsheimer's offensive neorealism is used as the theoretical vehicle for scenario-building enterprise in the realm of external balancing. In a secondary role neoclassical realism is used for discussing Argentinian prospects of internal balancing vis-à-vis assertive Brazil. From my point of view, both theories have been used correctly. An interesting ramification of the analysis could be in building set of scenarios based on an alternative (realist or non-realist) theory. One would be interested in differences and similarities.

Given that the author has decided to use singular theoretical perspective, it is hard to make at least a preliminary assessment of robustness of predictions developed in the thesis (something which might be interesting for plethora of readers). Simply put, right now it is hard to tell if the results are unique to the selected theoretical approach, or not.

2) Contribution: The thesis engages in theory driven scenario-building enterprise – which is rather neglected research agenda in current geopolitical or IR research. Similarly, the thesis engages with theories that are not among the most popular in Latin America, which makes its predictions truly interesting. I would dare to say that the thesis is to some extent contrarian to common – rather optimistic – wisdom concerning the prospect of the South America. Thus in this regard the thesis is quite innovative and its contribution is clear.

I think that prospects of internal balancing could have been more elaborated. Especially, I would expect more nuanced and thorough discussion of material/ideational preconditions for this type of balancing. While the issue of external balancing is interesting, the issue of internal balancing could have enabled the author to fully display his superb knowledge of the region and Argentina in particular.

My minor criticism would be that the wild card – nuclear weapons – could have been discussed in more depth.

3) Methods: Explicit – and I believe correct – use of scenario methodology as presented by Junio, Mahnken (2013). In this case a theory provides logical framework for building alternative scenarios. There is some empirical background in the sense of current material conditions limiting probability of alternative futures.

4) Literature: Numerous and adequate, including key academic papers on the both subject and theories... the literature is superb when it comes to theoretical basis of the work and empirical issues. Perhaps it could be more extensive regarding the issue of scenario building enterprise (there is “Journal Futures” which has published important papers on the topic over the years), nevertheless considering rather limited scope of the thesis this criticism is to some extent moot.

5) Manuscript form: There is clear and logical structure of the thesis. There is clear goal and the whole paper is structured in a way that helps a reader to follow main argument of the thesis. The text is mostly well written and focused, without unnecessary bifurcations to marginal issues. As far as tables are considered, I think that some numbers could have been more effectively communicated by using relative (%) expression (e.g. table 4) – once again, this is however rather minor point.

DATE OF EVALUATION:

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	1	= excellent	= A
61 – 80	2	= good	= B
51 – 60	3	= satisfactory	= C
41 – 50	3	= satisfactory	= D
0 – 40	4	= fail	= not recommended for defence