

## REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

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

<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<b>American Humanitarian Interventions</b>
<b>Author of the thesis:</b>	<b>Victorya Arakelyan</b>
<b>Referee (incl. titles):</b>	<b>RNDr. Jan Kofroň, Ph.D.</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>	12
<i>Contribution (max. 20)</i>	8
<i>Methods (max. 20)</i>	10
<i>Literature (max. 20)</i>	14
<i>Manuscript form (max. 20)</i>	17
<b>TOTAL POINTS (max. 100)</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)</b>	<b>2.5 (B/C)</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:** I appreciate that the thesis explicitly engages with two key theories offering insight into the possible causes and motivations for humanitarian interventions (political realism and idealism). While on the general level these two theories are well described, there are some problems regarding the theoretical part. Firstly, both realism and idealism are very diverse traditions of thought. Thus it would strengthen the thesis if one of the varieties of realism/idealism would have been explicitly described and then used. It would help to derive clear and explicit hypothesis for empirical testing (via case studies). So far the connection between theoretical and empirical part is rather implicit at worst, or not fully elaborated at best.  
Specifically, the author rests mostly on Morgenthau and Carr (classical realists), whose thought however does not provide the best ground for deducing testable hypotheses. While this tradition offers clear justification for one IV (power differential), I think that neorealism (more naturalist strand of realist thinking) would have provided a better starting point. Nevertheless, given that the thesis is rather inductive than deductive, my criticism here is not extremely strong.  
I lacked a bit discussion of R2P concept and its realist criticism (see Pape 2012). Explicit discussion of this widely debated concept could have strengthened the thesis significantly.

- 2) Contribution:** The attempt to build a model or test theoretically informed variables must be applauded as it offers chance for accumulation of knowledge. In the conclusion the author says that no one factor can fully explain humanitarian interventions (in the case of the USA). While I can agree with this point, one can easily ask if this eclectic result (everything matters) is not an artefact of problematic case selection.  
More specifically – the author says that power disparity has relatively weakest impact among all the variables. While probably true in the context of selected cases, one can easily imagine a counterfactual case, which disproves author's claim. Try to imagine that there is a genocide in the China or Russia (states equipped with strong armies and endowed with nuclear weapons) – can you really imagine that the USA would intervene militarily, risking nuclear war, in such case?

While this particular counterfactual is indeed extreme, it illustrates well that the conclusions of the thesis are to some extent problematic and that a reader might doubt how far the results could travel outside of the studied sample. While comparative case studies are quite often weak on external validity, careful case selection rules might help to some extent ameliorate the problem. At least, the author could have discussed the issue of generalizability of the results in the conclusion.

**3) Methods:** The paper employs an adequate method – comparative case studies – for its current purpose. However I have to disagree that rigorous process tracing was used (as implied at page 10). Process tracing demands an attempt to map causal mechanism (with its subtle inter-steps) laying between an IV and a DV. In the case of the paper, it would demand clarifying decision-making process leading to (non)intervention – something the paper is not attempting to do now.

The problems connected with relationship between variables and theories have been discussed above, therefore I will not repeat them here. There are however three other issues. Firstly, a deeper discussion of case selection logic should have been offered. I believe that such a discussion would have provided a firmer ground for assessment of generalizability of the results. Secondly, I think that the measurement of power differential employed in the paper is unnecessarily complicated. Given that power differential in the case of a military (humanitarian) intervention is essentially given by ability of a power to militarily intervene in a country of interest, it would be better to focus just on military power alone. All other components of the power differential are irrelevant here. Nevertheless the alternative measurement would not affect results significantly. Finally, the work claims that it works with two dependent variables: intervention and nonintervention. I think, that it would be better to say that there is one dependent variable with two possible states (either intervention or non-intervention).

**4) Literature:** The thesis works with a broad set of relevant sources. Literature covers key theoretical as well as empirical sources – both very recent volumes and those classical. There is however one significant gap in the literature, as methodological papers/books are not cited at all. I believe, that had the author worked more with methodological texts, she would have been able to offer more nuanced (and convincing) discussion of case selection logic on the one hand and generalizability of her results on the other (see my comments above).

It is unfortunate that while the text cites important Pape's (2012) article, this interesting work has not been fully exploited. The article not only offers a realist perspective on humanitarian interventions, it presents a very strong critique of R2P concept – a concept which was not – unfortunately – addressed in the thesis.

**5) Manuscript form:** In general the manuscript is well written with only occasional typos. Structure is logical and appropriate to the goal of the paper. Some parts could have been more elaborated or enlarged (i.e. methodology) but in general the paper does not suffer from marked imbalances.

To sum it up; the submitted thesis deals with an interesting and controversial topic. The author should be praised for her willingness to engage in relatively complex and hard to solve research questions. Despite some problems especially in methodology and explicit linking of theoretical and empirical parts of the text, the thesis fulfils all standards imposed by our institution on this kind of work.

Therefore I recommend grade 2,5 (B/C).

**DATE OF EVALUATION: 28.1.2016**

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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