



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Phu Nguyen Doan

Title: Asia-Pacific Rebalance: New Realities in Traditional US Alliances in the Region

Programme/year: Master in International Relations

Author of Evaluation (supervisor/external assessor): supervisor – Jan Karlas

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	30
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	35
<i>Total</i>		80	75
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	20
TOTAL		100	95



Evaluation

Major criteria:

This thesis explores the level of cooperation between the US and its three counterparts represented by Australia, Japan, and South Korea in three dyadic alliances. The research topic is important and up-to-date. The Obama's administration sought in the preceding years to reinforce the bilateral cooperation with the respective countries. Yet the author interestingly points out that the level of cooperation within the three alliances is not the same. This established an interesting issue to analyze.

The thesis starts with a very extensive literature review. The review demonstrates that the author is very well versed in the existing literature. The quality of the review could only be enhanced if the author concentrated more on synthesizing the arguments from the literature rather than on trying to identify and present every single important piece.

In order to account for the different level of cooperation, the thesis draws on the three main theoretical approaches to international relations, namely realism, liberalism, and constructivism. The author suitably and safely established the competing explanations for the varying strength of the alliances, building on the mentioned theoretical approaches. While outlining these explanations succinctly, he shows an excellent grasp of major IR theories. Importantly, he does justice to country size as a potentially important causal variable. Methodologically, the author relies on a comparative case study. I would like to highlight that he conducts a very detailed valid operationalization of all the variables.

The concrete elaboration of the involved variables enables the author to carry out their precise analysis in the two empirical chapters. At first, the thesis documents the differences among the three alliances, using a sufficient number of indicators, as well as an adequate number of sources. Subsequently, after executing the comparative explanatory analysis, the thesis convincingly argues that the factors related to security threats and economic interests determine the strength of the alliances more than a cultural affinity. The determination of the values of the independent variables proceeds, to some extent, in a looser manner. The author sticks to clear indicators, only the values are set a little bit loosely. However, this is clearly unavoidable and justified, as it is – unlike in a statistical analysis – very difficult to specify accurate values of quantitative variables in a small number of cases.



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Minor criteria:

No comments

Overall evaluation:

This thesis deals with an adequate, but also interesting topic. It is very well anchored in the existing literature and the author shows a very good ability to situate his arguments in the existing knowledge and research. The thesis selects relevant explanations and develops them in a very clear and accurate manner. Author conducts an excellent definition and measurement of the variables used. This enables him to carry out a very precise and valid empirical analysis. Yet he is also aware of the limitations of his approach, which he openly discusses in the thesis. Overall, I am convinced that this thesis constitutes a very solid piece of work and I suppose that it does not contain any major drawbacks which should prevent it from being graded as excellent.

Suggested grade:

Excellent (1)

Signature: